

Bringing the Dead to Life:

**Identification, Interpretation, and Display of Chinese Burial Objects in the
Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum**

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*Figures from 'China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy' website are copied with permission from Canterbury Museum.

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Introduction

This thesis presents a study of how museums collect and display burial objects. In particular, it focuses on objects which had been buried with the dead. The case studies which constitute the starting point for this inquiry are Chinese burial objects from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) of the Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum. In the tomb, Chinese burial objects had a primarily religious purpose, and were intended for the use and appreciation of the dead only. However, they are known in the ‘West’ on account of their having been unearthed, transported, and placed in new cultural contexts, such as on display in museums for contemplation by living audiences. This creates many ontological complexities for the objects, and in this study I address some of the issues which arise as a result of their display in the new cultural context of the museum, and discuss in what ways the objects, as cultural and material entities, acquire new identities and meanings. In particular, I interrogate curatorial practices around the interpretation and display of such objects, and the museological assumptions upon which these rest.

In the first chapter I discuss the history, provenance and context of the Alley Collection Chinese burial objects, beginning with their production in Han Dynasty China. I explain some of the major religions and belief systems which shaped thought and material culture in the Han Dynasty, and how these informed the creation and function of burial objects.

Michael Loewe’s texts *Divination and Monarchy in Han Dynasty China*¹ and *Chinese Ideals of Life and Death: Faith, myth and reason in the Han Period*² discuss the belief systems and religious ideas which shaped thought in the Han Dynasty, and provide a contextual background upon which to understand the

¹ Michael Loewe, *Divination, mythology and monarchy in Han China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

² Michael Loewe, *Chinese Ideals of Life and Death: Faith Myth and Reason in the Han Period (202BC-220AD)*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1982.

creation and function of the burial objects. Hung Wu's 'From Temple to Tomb'³ argues that the rise of the importance of individual tombs and their associated artefacts in the Han Dynasty was a result of a move away from ancestor worship. Another article by Wu, 'Enlivening the Soul in Chinese Tombs'⁴ presents a more in-depth study of tombs, their contents, and the purpose of these contents. Loewe's work is useful for gaining an understanding of thought and wider practices of religious belief in the Han Dynasty in general, and Wu's work provides a more detailed study of Chinese tombs and burial objects themselves. Through applying this theory to identify and analyse actual examples of Chinese burial objects from the Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum, I offer a new contribution to this existing research.

The examples I chose to identify and discuss from the Alley Collection were selected based on their representation of the purpose and function of Chinese burial objects. For instance, I selected various models of utilitarian items and figures to illustrate items which were used by the *po* in the tomb, and models of horses to assist the *hun* in its journey to the afterlife. Canterbury Museum Records were a particularly useful primary source for the identification and discussion of these items. Various newspaper articles, and letters between Rewi Alley and Roger Duff helped me to identify details about the individual objects, including when they were accessioned into the Museum. Likewise, Ralph Riccalton's undated article 'The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artifacts at Canterbury Museum'⁵ also helped me to pinpoint when the objects were acquired by the Museum, and provided some historical information and details about their production.

My research into the general creation and function of Chinese burial objects, in combination with the information derived from these sources, and comparing the Alley Collection examples to similar items from other collections around the world, allowed me to identify various pieces in the Alley Collection

³ Wu Hung, 'From Temple to Tomb: Ancient Chinese Art and Religion in Transition', *Early China*, Vol.13 (1988), pp.78-115.

⁴ Wu Hung, 'Enlivening the soul in Chinese Tombs', *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No.55/56, Absconding (Spring-Autumn, 2009), pp.21-41.

⁵ Ralph Riccalton, 'The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artifacts at Canterbury Museum', undated, Canterbury Museum Records (hereafter CMR), Fine Arts 6-7, Box 31, Folder 82.

which have never been properly identified before. For instance, I was able to identify the item C1947.9 as a model well-head, which had previously been incorrectly documented as a model redoubt on one occasion, and a model watchtower on another. I was also able to confirm the identification of the other items, in some cases adding details to their original description, such as distinguishing the instrument being played by the figure C1956.656 as a *pipa*, or traditional Chinese lute, and C1956.219, which was originally identified as a horse, as a *qilin* unicorn horse.

The second chapter explores several intersecting theoretical contexts in which burial objects might be understood. These include death, memory, ethics, and sacrality, and museology's dealings with these themes. One of the primary roles of museums is to preserve cultural identity and meaning through the display of objects and artefacts, but objects made or placed in the tomb specifically for burial purposes (and indeed other types of artefact) – arguably problematise this model by being put on view. I therefore discuss the complex relationships between museums and theoretical concepts in order to contextualise burial objects within wider practices of collecting, preservation, and display. This study, for the first time in English, synthesises these various theoretical issues with Chinese burial objects, which offers new ways of understanding and engaging with the objects, and opens up new ideas for research.

Peter Vergo's *The New Museology*⁶ and Paul Duro's *The Rhetoric of the Frame*⁷ are compilations of essays on modern museums, museological practice, and various ways in which modern museums and modes of display can be interpreted. These two texts were a useful starting point in relation to my discussion of museological theory in order to understand the conceptual and ontological effects this has on objects in the museum. Of particular interest was how objects become 'museologised' and subjected to methods such as classification and categorisation upon entering the museum, and the different ways

⁶ Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 1989.

⁷ Paul Duro (ed.) *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

objects are perceived and represented by how they are arranged within the ‘frame’ of the museum.⁸ I expanded their theories of museology by discussing them in specific relation to Chinese burial objects and the consequences of their display.

Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey’s *Death, Memory, and Material Culture*⁹ discusses the importance of material objects in relation to death and memory. Hallam and Hockey examine how death-related objects allow us to remember, how such objects allow the dead to live on in the present, and how memories can be constructed from them. I applied this theory to the display of Chinese burial objects by discussing them as death-related objects and the ways in which death and memory can be understood in relation to them.

Susan A. Crane’s *Museums and Memory*¹⁰ examines ways in which memory operates in the museum. This text was valuable for contextualising Chinese burial objects, as it determines ways in which memory and death can be engaged with in relation to both objects themselves and the museum space which they occupy, and the interrelation between the two.

In regard to the ethical considerations of the treatment of death-related objects in the museum context, Sanchita Balachandran’s article ‘Among the Dead and their Possessions’¹¹ was of interest, concerning the preservation of human remains through conservation treatment, and the effect this has both physically and conceptually on the remains. It considers the conservator’s ethical obligations in dealing with such material, and how conservation treatment can both ‘dehumanise’ and ‘rehumanise’ it.¹² I suggest that the display of burial objects is akin to conservation treatment, as similarly, modes of display can be used to ‘rehumanise’ the objects.

⁸ Vergo (ed.), pg.1-4, Charles Saumarez Smith, ‘Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings’ in Vergo (ed.), pg.6-20, Donald Preziosi ‘Brain of the Earth’s Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity’ in Duro (ed.), pg.103-106, Wolfgang Ernst ‘Framing the Fragment: Archaeology, Art, Museum’ in Duro (ed.), pg.111-132.

⁹ Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory & Material Culture*, Berg, Oxford; New York, 2001.

¹⁰ Susan A. Crane (ed.), *Museums and Memory*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000.

¹¹ Sanchita Balachandran, ‘Among the Dead and their Possessions; A Conservator’s role in the Death, Life, and Afterlife of Human Remains and their Associated Objects’, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall/Winter 2009), pp. 199-222.

¹² Balachandran, pg.119, 208.

Closely related is Samuel J. M.M. Alberti, Piotr Bienkowski, Malcolm J. Chapman, and Rose Drew's article 'Should we display the dead?',¹³ which presents a discussion as to whether or not human remains should be displayed, and if so, how. Considering Chinese burial objects as human remains facilitated an investigation for my own study into the extent to which such objects could be treated and displayed ethically in a museum.

Bruce M. Sullivan's text *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*¹⁴ is a study of objects derived from Asian cultures that had religious significance in their original contexts, and the ways this is dealt with when such objects become part of museum collections. It questions whether or not such objects can still be considered sacred in this new context, and how they become sacred in a different way. This informed my discussion of Chinese burial objects as sacred objects, and the ways in which their treatment and display by museums affects the extent to which they are interpreted as sacred. Although Chinese burial objects were intended for burial, and their original sacrality is transformed by museological processes in the museum context, they can be made sacred in a new way through display.

Drawing on the historical and theoretical backgrounds of the objects themselves, and the various conceptual frameworks which might be applied to them, the third chapter discusses the Rewi Alley Collection burial objects in the context of their interpretation and display in two major installations of East Asian art at Canterbury Museum: the Hall of Oriental Art (1958) and the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts (1994). This is the first study to examine and discuss critically how these installations frame the Chinese burial objects included among their exhibits.

The transformation objects undergo having been intended for the dead to being displayed in museums for the contemplation of the living raises questions around the identity of the objects, and the representation

¹³ Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, Piotr Bienkowski, Malcolm J. Chapman, and Rose Drew, 'Should we display the dead', *Museum and Society*, 7 (3), March 2009, pp.133-144.

¹⁴ Bruce M. Sullivan (ed.), *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

(or erasure) of their original identities by imposing new stories or narratives upon them. For instance, although there is an attempt to display the Chinese burial objects in the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts in the context of their original environment, I suggest that this is more representative of the archaeological discovery of the objects than of the objects themselves in situ in the tomb.

I begin with an exploration of the display of Chinese art and Chinese burial objects from the Rewi Alley Collection in various exhibitions leading up to their display in the first permanent installation at Canterbury Museum. A pivotal event was the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art, held at the Durham Street Gallery in 1952, which appears to have influenced the design and construction of the Hall of Oriental Art. A report written by G.C.C. Sandston to Duff on the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art outlines suggestions for what could be emulated in the design of the Hall of Oriental Art: many of which were adopted.¹⁵ Moreover, the catalogue to this Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art offers insight into how Chinese burial objects from the Alley Collection were perceived, understood, and displayed prior to the construction of the first permanent Museum installation.¹⁶

There are a series of other documents in the Canterbury Museum Records outlining details of the design and construction of the subsequent Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, which were very useful in identifying why and how this new installation was created, and determining the consequences this had on the display of Chinese burial objects.

The research undertaken for this thesis on Chinese burial objects in the Rewi Alley Collection is part of the larger research project 'Selling New China to New Zealand, Rewi Alley and the Art of Museum

¹⁵ Letter from G.C.C. Sandston to Roger Duff (Report on the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art) 9/6/1952, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 1.

¹⁶ Canterbury Museum, *Chinese and Japanese Art: An Exhibition Held Under the Auspices of the Canterbury Museum, 21 April to 17 May 1952 at the Durham Street Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand*, Pegasus Press, 1952, pg.4.

Diplomacy’, led by Dr. Richard Bullen and Associate Professor James Beattie. The purpose of this project is to investigate the Collection, how it developed, and the extent to which the artefacts encouraged favourable perceptions of a ‘New China’ in New Zealand. My contribution rests not only in identifying various Chinese burial objects in the Collection and providing relevant information about them, but also in analysing and contextualising them in relation to museological practice and the issues raised by their display.

Substantial research and scholarship currently exists on Chinese burial objects, offering a framework for the study of certain items in the Alley Collection, which before now have never been the subject of scholarly attention. However, thematic and theoretical research into death, memory, ethics, sacrality, and material culture, and the relations between these subjects, contribute to relatively new and growing fields. This study is the first that I am aware of to use ideas from these fields, in conjunction with museological theory, for the specific study of Chinese burial objects. It is not my intention in this research to seek fixed conclusions, but rather to open a discussion about these objects and the possible ways that they can be engaged with in the museum context, and to invite further inquiry and research into these themes.

Chapter One: History and Provenance of Chinese Burial Objects with examples from the Rewi Alley Collection

The Han Dynasty was a period of relative stability and contentment in Chinese history, and within this climate, the arts flourished.¹ Funerary art developed and prospered more than any other art form during this period and became the dominant form for which the Han Dynasty is known.² Until the Han, the arts had reflected religious thinking, but this became even more profound in the Han period. The primary inspiration for artistic practice derived from a desire to render religious and philosophical ideas concrete, and the majority of art forms produced during the Han Dynasty were instrumental, or at least related to, various forms of religious experience or ritual.³ Ancestor worship was one of the most prominent forms of ritual, but the shift of the religious centre during the Han Dynasty from the ancestral temple, where ancestor worship was performed, to individuals' tombs, saw the decline of artistic practices associated with ancestor worship, and the rise of funerary art. A number of other belief systems, to various extents, informed the production and function of burial objects, and the development of these 'spirit vessels', or *mingqi*, established a new connection between the living and the dead, and provided a sufficient way to maintain the harmonious interaction between spirits of the different realms. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss the religious climate and outline some of the major belief systems active in the Han Dynasty which contributed to the growth and development of funerary art, and influenced the creation, function, and use of *mingqi* burial objects. This will provide a context for examples from the Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum, which will be identified and described in the following section.

Shift of the Religious Centre from Temple to Tomb

¹ Rene Grousset, *Chinese Art and Culture*, Andre Deutsch Ltd., London, 1959, pg.103, Yvonne Tan, 'Splendours of The Han', *Asian Art*, December 2014, pg.10.

² Dagny Carter, *Four Thousand Years of China's Art*, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1948, pg.76, Hung Wu, 'From Temple to Tomb: Ancient Chinese Art and Religion in Transition', *Early China*, Vol.13 (1988), pg.79, Henry Trubner, John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Myron S. & H.T. Falk Jr., 'Arts of the Han Dynasty: Chinese Art Society of America Asia House', *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America*, Vol.14 (1960), pg.12.

³ Wu, 1988, pg.78.

Ancestor worship had for a long time held a prominent position in the social, political, and religious outlook of China, and services dedicated to the shrines of the imperial ancestors was one way in which political, economic, intellectual, and religious issues operated in unison.⁴ However, a significant phenomenon which took place during the Han Dynasty was the shift of the religious centre from the ancestral temple to the tomb. Prior to the Han Dynasty, particularly during the Shang (1600-1046B.C.) and Zhou (1046-256 B.C.) Dynasties, sacrifices and offerings were predominantly made to ancestral temples. However, from the first century B.C., it became more common to make sacrifices and offerings to individuals' tombs. The ancestral temple represented a whole lineage of ancestors, and when worship was paid at one of these temples, all members of that lineage were worshiped together. However, tombs represented only one individual, who was usually an immediate family member to those expressing their reverence.⁵ One cause of this change in focus was a social and religious transformation during the late Zhou period as a result of the decline of the royal house, which had endorsed temple worship. According to Hung Wu, society was no longer united under a hierarchical genealogical structure and placed a new authority and emphasis on the individual.⁶ Therefore, the shift from temple to tomb resulted in a revolution of ancestral worship, and for artistic forms which were based on this to take on new functions and expressions, leading to the growth of funerary art.⁷ As a result, funerary art became the most dominant art form of the Han Dynasty.⁸

⁴ Michael Loewe, *Divination, mythology and monarchy in Han China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pg.274.

⁵ Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, Oxford University Press, 1997, pg.34, Wu, 1988, pg.79, 90, 101-102, Hung Wu, 'Enlivening the soul in Chinese Tombs', *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No.55/56, Absconding (Spring-Autumn, 2009), pg.22-23, Mark Edward Lewis, *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, pg.198.

⁶ Wu, 1988, pg.90.

⁷ Ibid, pg.78, 101-102.

⁸ Carter, pg.76, Wu, 1988, pg.79, Trubner, et al, pg.12.

Ritual bronzes were the prized art form of ancestral temple worship, but as the emphasis moved from the temple to the tomb, this art form lost its value and gradually died out.⁹ Bronze vessels were also used in elite tombs, but for lower ranking tombs substitutes were made from pottery, which were known as ‘spirit vessels.’ These pottery substitutes were originally modelled on bronzes and became more popular and widely used by the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-221 B.C.), featuring in all except the most elite tombs.¹⁰ The objects were referred to as ‘spirit vessels’ as they were created or placed in the tomb exclusively for the use of the dead and, therefore, the spirits. Consequently, with the rise of funerary art a new relationship between the living and the dead was established. The primary function of ritual bronze vessels in ancestor worship had been to maintain links between the living and the dead, whereas, since these pottery ‘spirit vessels’ functioned solely for the dead, the emphasis shifted from the relationship between the living and the dead, to the dead alone.¹¹ Thus, as the religious centre moved from the temple to the tomb, so did the artistic centre, and a new form of artistic expression came to the fore.

Major Belief Systems in the Han Dynasty

A primary concern prevalent among both intellectuals and the common people in the Han period were ideas surrounding life and death.¹² The Chinese were anxious to explore and understand what happened to a person after death and how best their needs could be provided for in regard to this.¹³ During the Han Dynasty there was no one predominant religion, but rather a variety of belief systems which coexisted and interrelated with one another, where different modes of thought could be applied to different areas of life

⁹ Trubner, et al, pg.10-11, Wu, 1988, pg.78, Mu-Chou Poo, 'Ideas Concerning Death and Burial in Pre-Han and Han China', *Asia Major*, Third Series, Vol.3, No.2 (1990), pg.31.

¹⁰ Joy Elizabeth Beckman, 'The meaning of material: ritual vessel assemblages in Chu burials of the fourth and third centuries BC, China', *Antiquity*, Vol.87, Issue 337 (September 2013), pg.772, 773-774, R.L Hobson, *Chinese Art*, Spring Books, London, 1964, pg.10, Lewis, pg.191.

¹¹ Lewis, pg.191, Wu, 1988, pg.94, Hobson, pg.10.

¹² Ying-Shih Yu, 'Life and Immortality in The Mind of Han China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 25 (1964 - 1965), pg.80.

¹³ Michael Loewe, *Chinese Ideals of Life and Death: Faith Myth and Reason in the Han Period (202BC-220AD)*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1982, pg.26.

and different gods or spirits were worshipped accordingly.¹⁴ The main aim in most forms of belief and worship was to procure blessings and avert calamity, which applied in large part to beings occupying the different realms and maintaining harmonious interactions between them.¹⁵ Closely connected to these ideas was the belief in spirits and their role within the various divisions of the universe. As Michael Loewe explains:

During the Ch'in [Qin] and Han periods the Chinese served a multiplicity of gods and spirits. There were the holy spirits (*shen*) attached to particular localities; there were the lords of natural forces such as wind and rain; and there were the gods who presided over occupational skills such as those of the kitchen or the spinning wheel. In addition there were the *kuei* (*gui*), sometimes identified as the spirits of the dead that derived from human beings. Superior to all these categories were the *ti* [*di*] of the various divisions of the universe, and *t'ien* [*tien*], or heaven, who came to be regarded as the highest power of all.¹⁶

Thus, the universe was divided up and governed by different gods and spirits, and the main objective of religious practice was to ensure these entities interacted harmoniously to ensure harmony in the living realm.

Along with the overarching beliefs in gods and spirits, two dominant belief systems observed in the Han Dynasty were Confucianism and Daoism. Confucianism, which was established around 495B.C., stressed a devotion towards rulers and respect for elders, along with a strong advocacy for duty, organisation and ethical conduct.¹⁷ Daoism was a more esoteric belief system based on early philosophical works such as *Dao De Jing* (fifth century B.C.) and the *Zhuangzi* (third century B.C.), emphasizing being in harmony with the *Dao*, or, 'the way', which was considered the primordial force of the universe from which all

¹⁴ Loewe, 1982, pg.7, 17, Poo, pg.61-62.

¹⁵ Loewe, 1982, pg.17.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Leigh Ashton & Basil Gray, *Chinese Art*, Faber and Faber, London, 1935, pg.22-23, Clunas, pg.34-35, Grousset, pg.70-71, Loewe 1982, pg.9.

things manifested.¹⁸ In the Han period, the text *Huainanzi* (second century B.C.) was compiled by a group of court writers, based on the original Daoist texts, and discussed the operation of the natural forces of the universe, seeking to explain them in terms of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.¹⁹ In Confucian philosophy, the performance of *li*, or proper rituals, was thought to be an important part of maintaining societal order, and these rituals were applied to both the living and dead. As Confucius stated, ‘When the parents are alive, serve them according to the *li*; when they are dead, bury them according to the *li*; and make offerings to them according to the *li*.’²⁰ Consequently, the living and the dead were considered intrinsic to one another and in order to maintain a peaceful society for the living, a peaceful existence had to also be assured for the dead.

While Confucianism dealt more with the realm of the living, and how society should act towards the dead, Mohism (*Mojia*), a belief system which flourished in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), and had continued influence in the Han Dynasty, recognised the realm of the dead and the existence of ghosts and spirits.²¹ Daoists did not place so much emphasis on death or what happens thereafter as death was considered but one part of the endless cycle and transformation from life to rebirth.²² However, the Daoist texts did discuss in some detail what was known as the ‘Isles of the Immortals’.²³ Thus, in many of the dominant philosophies of the Han Dynasty, death and the afterlife were of some degree of concern, but in all cases, maintenance of order and harmony in the realm of the living was paramount.

Immortality and the notion of Transcendence

¹⁸ Ashton & Gray, pg.23, Loewe 1982, pg.8.

¹⁹ Loewe 1982, pg.9.

²⁰ Poo, pg.26.

²¹ Poo, pg.34, Yu, pg.81.

²² Poo, pg.35.

²³ Trubner, et al, pg.11.

While maintenance of the realm of the living was of primary importance, this was dependent to a large degree on the realm of the dead. Another concept which became particularly popular in the Han Dynasty was the possibility of immortality and various means to achieve it. The notion of longevity and attempts to prolong life had always been a primary consideration in Chinese society,²⁴ but the possibility of immortality somewhat eclipsed this attachment to living a long life in the worldly realm by offering eternal life in a world beyond it. The first instance of an idea of immortality can be dated to the early Eastern Zhou Dynasty, when there was an interest in preserving the human body permanently and finding methods to do so. Concepts such as *wu ssu* (*wu si*), or ‘no death’ were established and were frequently seen on bronze inscriptions, marking the first instance of the possibility of physical immortality in one’s current body.²⁵ Later, towards the end of the Warring States period, emerged the new conception of immortality, that as opposed to living forever in the worldly realm, one could leave that realm as a *hsien* (*xian*), or ‘immortal’, and live eternally in a world beyond. Thus, the concept of immortality shifted from having a worldly, to an otherworldly, emphasis.²⁶

Related to the otherworldly notion of immortality was the idea of transcendence, which derived from Daoist philosophy and contributed to the desire for otherworldly immortality. In the *Huangdi Neijing*, created sometime between the Warring States and Qin-Han Dynasties, stories are told of the Yellow Emperor who ascended to immortality by way of the ‘masters of methods’ who were individuals of the worldly realm that claimed knowledge of the immortals and the paths to transcendence.²⁷ This otherworldly conception of immortality was popularized by the emperor and made accessible to nobles and commoners, and consequently underwent an earthly transformation to suit the taste of its new

²⁴ Lewis, pg.173, Yu, pg.87.

²⁵ Yu, pg.87, Lewis, pg.202.

²⁶ Yu, pg.89, 93.

²⁷ Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Readings in Han Chinese Thought*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., USA, 2006, pg.142-143, Loewe, 1982, pg.19.

audience who were more attached to the worldly realm and maintaining a connection to it.²⁸ This development can be traced through the changing views on the life of *hsien (xian)* immortals. For example, in pre-Qin literature the *xian* is portrayed as a solitary individual with no relation to the worldly realm, whereas, in Han literature there are accounts of the *xian* having brought with him to this otherworldly realm, people and material comforts he enjoyed in the worldly one. Thus, regardless of the alterations made to the concept of immortality over time, what is certain is that there was a desire to carry on one's worldly existence, whether this be in the earthly realm of the living, or in an otherworldly realm beyond.

Spirits and the Otherworldly Realm

An all pervasive belief in Han Dynasty China was the existence of spirits (*shen*). Sacrifices and offerings were made to spirits which inhabited a realm parallel to that of the human, and it was believed that spirits could move between these two realms. When a person died, their spirit would move to this otherworldly realm and sacrifices and offerings were made to make sure the spirit remained there and did not try to pass back through to the worldly realm where it could interfere with the living.²⁹ As Mark Edward Lewis observes:

Along with such divisions as those between Heaven and Earth or man and woman, the separation between the living and the dead was a fundamental boundary whose disappearance would lead to disorder. The reappearance of the dead in the human world signaled the collapse of this boundary, which could only result in catastrophe for the living.³⁰

This fear that spirits of the deceased could return and cause havoc in the realm of the living frequented Chinese history and fiction, and documents and texts were often buried in tombs warning against spirits

²⁸ Yu, pg.94-95, 106.

²⁹ Lewis, pg.178, 204, Csikszentmihalyi, pg.116-117, Jonathan Hay, 'Seeing through dead eyes: How early Tang tombs staged the afterlife', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No.57/58 (Spring/Autumn 2010), pg.27.

³⁰ Lewis, pg.194.

of the deceased.³¹ The term *gui*, or ‘demon’, was used to refer to these spirits which returned to the worldly realm in the form of ghosts, to cause illness and unrest.³² To prevent this from happening, various measures were taken to appease the spirit of the deceased. Therefore, besides performing sacrifices and making offerings to the dead, endeavours were also made to ensure the comfort and contentment of the deceased’s spirit in the tomb.³³

The otherworldly realm, to which deceased spirits were destined, was said to comprise of four parts: the Blessed Isles of the East, the whole structure of being that underlies the universe, the magical realm of the West, and the land of the Yellow Springs.³⁴ The land of the Yellow Springs is probably the most commonly quoted destination for the deceased’s spirit, and in order to understand how the spirit of the deceased reaches this destination, an explanation of the composition of the spirit is required. There were numerous and differing understandings of what happened to the spirit or soul after death, but the most common explanation regarded the *hun* and *po*, which were the two parts comprising the human soul.³⁵ Originally, the spirit of a person was just referred to as *po*, meaning ‘moonlight’, due to its involvement in the cycle of birth and death, like the waxing and waning moon. However, around the sixth century B.C. the term *hun* became used in conjunction with *po* in respect to a belief that every person actually has two souls, each with different characteristics which reside harmoniously in the living person’s body. The *po* was associated with the physical body and had little movement within it, whereas the *hun* was associated with the mind and spirit, had greater mobility, and the capacity to transcend the physical body.³⁶

³¹ Ibid.

³² Csikszentmihalyi, pg.116.

³³ Carter, pg.76, Loewe, 1982, pg.35, Lewis, pg.192-193, Hay, pg.27.

³⁴ Loewe, 1982, pg.27-28.

³⁵ Ibid, pg.26, Csikszentmihalyi, pg.141, Jessica Rawson, 'The Eternal Palaces of the Western Han: A View of the Universe', *Artibus Asiae*, Vol.59, No.1/2 (1999), pg.18.

³⁶ Wu, 2009, pg.22.

Upon death the two souls were thought to separate, the *hun* leaving the physical body and ascending to the realm of the Yellow Springs, while the *po* remained with the physical body in the tomb.³⁷ This understanding accords with poems such as the ‘Summoning of the *Hun*’ (*Zhao hun*) and the ‘Great Summons’ (*Da zhao*) of the third century B.C., from the Warring States poetry anthology ‘Songs of Chu’ (*Chu ci*), along with records of Zhou rituals which circulated during the Han period.³⁸ According to a passage in *Li ji* (Zhou Dynasty), the *hun* correlates to the spirit (*shen*) and ascends to the otherworldly realm, while the *po* correlates to the ghost spirit (*gui*) which remains in the worldly realm in the tomb with the deceased’s body.³⁹ Although the *po* remained in the tomb (which occupied the worldly realm), it was still considered a spirit of the otherworldly realm since it accompanied the dead. Thus, it was important that the *po* was provided with necessary and adequate comforts in the tomb because it was destined to remain there, and if not satisfied, could wreak havoc on the living.⁴⁰ Therefore, both the *hun* and the *po* were considered spirits of the dead and needed to be kept separate from the spirits of the living in the worldly realm, and in order to maintain this division and to retain order and harmony in the realm of the living, this required maintenance of the realm of the dead, and therefore, the tomb.

The Tomb and its Contents

A Han Dynasty tomb consisted of multiple parts. The outside of the tomb was often decorated with sculpted frescoes depicting scenes of the afterlife and the realm of the Yellow Springs, where the *hun* spirit of the deceased was destined.⁴¹ Inside the tomb itself was an area where the body was laid to rest, and depending on the person’s status, other areas and chambers were built within the tomb which often were modelled on the environment which had been familiar to the deceased during their life in the

³⁷ Ibid, Csikszentmihalyi, pg.140-141, Lewis, pg.199, Loewe, 1982, pg.26.

³⁸ Csikszentmihalyi, pg.140-141.

³⁹ Wu, 1988, pg.88.

⁴⁰ Loewe, 1982, pg.26-27, 114.

⁴¹ Lewis, pg.190.

worldly realm.⁴² Of course, the purpose of this was in part to satisfy the *po*, which was to remain in the tomb with the body and prevent it from wanting to return and cause disturbance in the realm of the living,⁴³ but this was also a means to make the deceased feel ‘at home’ and allow them to live on in the accustomed manner they had observed while living. In addition to the familiar environment structured in the tomb space, was the accompaniment of pottery or ceramic objects replicating items familiar or precious to the deceased in their previous life.⁴⁴ As Rene Grousset observes: ‘Undoubtedly, as in the tombs of the pharaohs, what we have here are ‘substitutes’ intended to enable the dead to continue his familiar existence and prevent him from feeling too much out of his element.’⁴⁵ Prior to the Han Dynasty, when an elite person died, actual people and animals close to them were sacrificed so that they could travel with the deceased and remain with them in the afterlife. However, the development of burial objects put an end to this practice by allowing the spirit of the person or animal to accompany the deceased to the afterlife through a model or substitute of its living form.⁴⁶ These items were known as ‘spirit vessels’, or ‘*mingqi*.’

***Mingqi* Burial Objects**

‘*Ming*’ is a descriptive term which was used to refer to anything pertaining to the spirits, and in particular, the spirits of the deceased.⁴⁷ Together, ‘*ming*’ and ‘*qi*’ meant ‘bright or pure vessel’.⁴⁸ In a passage from the *Zho zhuan*, which narrates events from the eighth to fifth centuries B.C., *mingqi* are referred to as gifted sacrificial vessels and were not specifically created for burial. However, sometime during the fourth century B.C. the term *mingqi* became more closely associated with grave goods, and this has since

⁴² Ibid, pg.189, 195.

⁴³ Loewe, 1982, pg.120-121.

⁴⁴ Colin Mackenzie & Ling-en Lu, *Masterworks of Chinese Art: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 2011, pg.13.

⁴⁵ Grousset, pg.93-94.

⁴⁶ Clunas, pg.27, Grousset, pg.94, Tan, pg.10.

⁴⁷ Derk Bodde, "The Term "Ming-Ch'i", *Ars Orientalis*, Vol.5 (1963), pg.283.

⁴⁸ Tan, pg.10.

become the most standard term for them.⁴⁹ Archeologists used the term to distinguish between ritual bronze vessels and substitute pottery vessels. From the fourth and third centuries B.C., ritual bronze vessels had been used by the living prior to burial, so the term *mingqi* was applied specifically to the substitute vessels since they had been made exclusively for burial.⁵⁰ It was assumed this was the case due to the material and size of the objects, which were too small and fragile actually to be used in the worldly realm (unlike the bronze vessels).⁵¹ As described in a passage from the third century B.C. Confucian text, the *Xunzi*: ‘pottery jars are empty and not to be filled...Carved wooden articles are not finished, potteries are not completed, woven bamboo items are left unfinished on the interior...Daily articles are adorned but are useless, *mingqi* have the appearance but cannot be used.’⁵² Thus, the objects were symbolic gestures, representative of the items they imitate but not intended to function in the same way as the originals. The *Li ji* expresses this concept particularly well, stating that while *liqi* (bronze vessels) are created for the use of the living, *mingqi* are created for the use of ghosts.⁵³ Hence they are useless to the living but can be used symbolically by the spirits of dead.

In graves dating from the fourth century B.C., *mingqi* were most often low-fired clay objects painted in bright colours to closely mimic ritual bronze vessels.⁵⁴ During the Han period it was common to apply a green lead-silicate glaze⁵⁵ to the earthenware objects, which faded over time and due to wear and decomposition, gives the objects a gold or silver iridescent appearance. They were made out of a variety of different materials including red brick, stone, bronze, jade, or even wood, but the majority are typically pottery.⁵⁶ Some were unglazed and could be either completely plain or decorated. If they were decorated,

⁴⁹ Beckman, pg.784-785, Wu, 2009, pg.21.

⁵⁰ Beckman, pg.784, Hobson, pg.10.

⁵¹ Beckman, pg.773, 784.

⁵² Ibid, pg.785.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Beckman, pg.773, Lubor Hajek & Werner Forman, *A book of Chinese art: four thousand years of sculpture, painting, bronze, jade, lacquer and porcelain*, Spring Books, London, 1966, pg.27.

⁵⁵ Hajek & Forman, pg.27.

⁵⁶ Ashton & Gray, pg.50, Rawson, pg.10, Trubner, et al, pg.10.

details were generally created by either painting with a brush, incising into the wet clay with a knife or stencil, or pressing into it with a mold before firing.⁵⁷ The choice of material seemed to depend on how prized the object was, with more durable materials such as stone or bronze being used for items of greater 'value'. However, the material was not of greatest concern, rather, it was the function of the object and the ability of the material to provide for this.⁵⁸ Although the majority of burial objects were made specifically for the deceased, some everyday items such as pots and jars which had been used in the worldly realm, were placed in the tomb to serve the same purpose as those which had been made specially. For this reason I will refer to the objects as burial objects to account for both types.

There were two primary functions of burial objects, which are reflected in the various subjects and items which were chosen to be modelled or placed in the tomb. These were objects either for the use and entertainment of the spirit of the deceased in the tomb (*po*), or to assist the deceased's spirit (*hun*) in its transition to the afterlife. The tomb was thought to act as a kind of liminal environment between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead, connecting the two, thus many burial objects were designed to assist the deceased in the transition from the realm of the living to that of the afterlife.⁵⁹ In concert with other aspects and contents of the tomb, other burial objects served to construct a familiar environment for the deceased in the tomb.⁶⁰ Existence in the afterlife was thought to replicate life in the worldly realm, hence the same items and objects were expected to be needed in the otherworldly realm.⁶¹ In the *Xunzi* it is stated that 'In the funeral rites one adorns the dead with the trappings of the living. On a grand scale one imitates what he had in life to send him off to the dead. As though dead, but as though still alive; as

⁵⁷ Trubner, et al, pg.10.

⁵⁸ Rawson, pg.11.

⁵⁹ Hay, pg.26, Loewe, 1982, pg.3, 31, 117, Clunas, pg.27-28.

⁶⁰ Trubner, et al, pg.10, Grousset, pg.93-94, Lewis, pg.194-195, Carter, pg.76, Hay, pg.17.

⁶¹ Ashton & Gray, pg.50, Rawson, pg.13, 19, Wu, 2009, pg.22.

though gone, but as though still present.’⁶² Objects of this nature were designed and intended for the use and entertainment of the *po* in the tomb.

Items for the *po* and identification of examples from the Rewi Alley Collection

Items which comprise burial objects for the *po* typically consist of replicas of everyday utilitarian items to provide for its everyday needs and necessities, and various figures who could entertain, serve, and protect the *po* in the tomb. Of utilitarian items, some of the most popular were models of granaries, various pots and vessels, and stoves, and of the various types of figures, the items roughly fall into the categories of either entertainers, attendants, or tomb guardians.

Utilitarian Items

Among utilitarian items in the Rewi Alley Collection are two models of granaries and a model well-head. The Han Dynasty was a predominantly agricultural society, so structures for storing and containing grain were essential items, and were an indication of wealth.⁶³ Since the afterlife was thought to reflect the living realm, such items were considered as important and useful in this realm, as they were in the former. Therefore, replicas of items such as granaries and wells were popular models for burial objects to ensure the deceased had these essential provisions and continued wealth in the afterlife.

The most common type of granary model was a cylindrical shape known as a *gun*, which, viewed in section, appears as either an inverted cone or vertical cylinder.⁶⁴ Although the two models in the Alley Collection are differing styles, both consist of a main body, roof, and opening for grain. The first, item

⁶² Lewis, pg.89.

⁶³ Qinghua Guo *The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China, 206 BC-AD 220: Architectural Representations and Represented Architecture*, Sussex Academic Press, 2010, pg.86, Mackenzie & Lu, pg.32.

⁶⁴ Guo, pg.86.

C1948.40 (fig.1), has a beige-coloured cylindrical *gun*-type body, tapering slightly toward the top, which is surmounted by a four-sided overhanging corrugated roof, with a point at the top. In one side of the cylindrical body is a narrow vertical rectangular opening through which the contents of the granary would be inserted. The roof shows traces of a green glaze. C1947.8 (fig.2), the second model granary in the Alley Collection, like C1948.40, is cylindrical in shape, tapering slightly toward the top. However, as opposed to being round, the sides comprise of four wider walls for the four main sides, and four narrower walls in between each, forming an overall shape which is octagonal in form. Also in keeping with C1948.40, is a narrow vertical rectangular opening in one side in one of the four wider walls. Though, unlike C1948.40, the roof of C1947.8 has broken off. What also differs is that C1947.8 is standing on three short legs, raising the object off the ground. C1947.8 also bears a green glaze, but this is mostly evident on the main body of the object, rather than the roof. C1947.9 (fig.3) is similar in form and style to the two model granaries C1948.40 and C1947.8, but is also baked earthenware and shows traces of a green glaze. It consists of an octagonal main body, with alternating wider and narrower walls, like C1947.8, with a square aperture in the top where water would be drawn from. On top of this main body is an A-frame shape, surmounted by a shallow, corrugated gable roof the same width as the object.

According to museum records, C1947.8 and C1947.9 were both acquired by Canterbury Museum in 1947, and possibly at the same time. In a letter from Rewi Alley to Owen Jackson of 30 May, 1947, two models of ‘redoubts’ are mentioned and are claimed by Alley to have come from an old Tang wall and been buried with Tang tombs in Wu Wei, Gansu Province.⁶⁵ C1947.9 is pictured in a newspaper article discussing recent acquisitions to the Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum, entitled ‘Ancient Works of Art Sent from China’, in which it, and C1947.8, are referred to as a ‘watchtowers’:

⁶⁵ Letter from Rewi Alley to Owen Jackson, 30/5/1947, Canterbury Museum Records (hereafter CMR), Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

...The most recent of the pieces of pottery is a rather ornate vase which Mr Alley dates about 1000 A.D...Older still is the glazed pottery of the T'ang Dynasty (618 A.D. to 906 A.D.), represented by a large vase with a green glaze from Liang Chow and two models of the watch towers that stood on the walls of that city during the T'ang period...⁶⁶

It is apparent that the two objects being referred to in these two instances are C1947.8 and C1947.9 and the place of origin is most likely correct, as is the acquisition date, but the items are misrepresented as 'watchtowers' or 'redoubts' when in fact one is a granary and the other a well-head. Forts and watchtowers were also central to Han society and were readily modelled for burial objects, and the simpler models are often similar in structural form to granaries and wells, and models of watchtowers often also had tiled roofs.⁶⁷ Therefore, these two models from the Rewi Alley Collection could quite easily be mistaken for models of watchtowers or redoubts, but from a comparison of some similar objects it can be confirmed that two of the objects discussed above are indeed granaries, and the other is a well-head.

There is an example of a granary from the Han Dynasty at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig.4). This object is of the *gun* type, cylindrical in form, with a corrugated roof and three short legs which raise it above the ground. There are a series of three horizontal bands of lines carved in relief around the main body of the object, and some detail carved in relief at the top of each of the feet. It has features which can be seen in both of the Alley examples. For instance, its round cylindrical form is similar to C1948.40, and it has a corrugated roof, as does C1948.40. Like C1947.8 it has three short legs to raise it above the ground, although those of C1947.8 do not have any carved decorative detail. Another example, also of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 9 B.C..), is a granary at the National Museum of Chinese History in Beijing, excavated from Jiangling, Hubei Province (fig.5). The main body of this model falls somewhere

⁶⁶ 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China', *The Press*, undated, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

⁶⁷ Mackenzie & Lu, pg.32.

between the inverted cone form and cylinder type, and tapers slightly toward the base. It has a corrugated roof with an overhang, which is surmounted by a carving in the shape of a bird. Around the upper and middle part of the main body of the object is a rope design carved in relief. There is a square opening in the lower part of the main body, and another in the upper part, which is presumably a man hole.⁶⁸ The overall form of this object is similar to both C1948.40 and C1947.8, and the corrugated roof is particularly similar to that of C1948.40.

An example of a granary which has a roof almost identical to C1948.40 is a model dated 180B.C., from Dongdianzi, Xuzhou (fig.6). The roof on this object is corrugated, with four sides, and has the same wide eaves and cupola at the top, just like C1948.40. Fig.6 is very simple in design, like C1948.40, and this design is also very similar to a granary at Ohara Museum of Art in Japan (fig.7). Although this model has square edges, it has no other details on the main body other than an opening in one side, and the roof is similarly four-sided and corrugated, with eaves and cupola. All four examples (figs.4, 5, 6, and 7) are considerably larger in size than the Rewi Alley examples, ranging between 24 and 43cm in height, whereas the tallest Alley Collection example is 22.4cm in height. This may well be because smaller objects were easier to transport, and thus were selected over larger objects to be transferred to Canterbury Museum.

Displaying similar characteristics to C1947.9 is a model of a well-head from the Metropolitan Museum (Fig.8). The main body of the object consists of a cylindrical barrel with a round hole in the top for retrieval of water. On top of this is a tall trapezoid structure, reinforced near the apex with two vertical thin bars, supporting a small corrugated gable roof. While the main body is cylindrical in shape, as opposed to octagonal like C1947.9, the trapezoid structure extending from this main body, and the roof

⁶⁸ Ibid, pg.87-88.

which surmounts it, are quite similar. The only difference between Fig.8 and C1947.9, in this regard, is that the horizontal bar does not extend beyond the two vertical sides which it connects, and the two thin vertical bars connecting this to the roof are closer together. Like C1947.9, Fig.8 also has a green glaze. Another example, from Henan Museum, is a model of a well head excavated in Lingbao County, Sanmenxia City, Henan (Fig.9). Like Fig.8 above, this model has a cylindrical base, with a round hole for retrieving water, surmounted by a trapezoid structure with two thin bars supporting a small gable roof. If the bars connecting the trapezoid-shaped structure to the roof were further apart on this model, the structure would form a trapezoid shape very similar to that of C1947.9. Therefore, the trapezoid structure surmounting the main body of C1947.9 is a variation of that of Fig.8 and Fig.9. Consequently, unlike the museum records claim, and by comparison to other similar models of well-heads, it can be concluded that C1947.9 is not a model of a redoubt, and, rather, is a model of a well-head.

Various pots, jars and vases were popular additions to the tomb to provide the deceased with items for storage, and for eating and drinking. Some of these items may have been placed in the tomb as opposed to having been made specifically to be buried. C1947.2 (fig.10) is a vessel which was to be used for storage, most likely wine. In the Press article 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China', there is an item described as 'a large wine jar' which is possibly the item referred to here. If this is the case, it can also be confirmed that it was excavated from the ancient city of Hei Shui Kuo, which is now buried by sand.⁶⁹ Made from burnished earthenware, it is a globular shape which tapers slightly toward the base, and has a short, thin neck with an outward turning rim. There are horizontal bands with a vertical linear pattern around the widest part of the vessel, and another thinner band just under the neck, created by a twisted cord being pressed into the wet clay before firing.⁷⁰ Another vessel in the Alley Collection is item C1947.1 (fig.11), also of the Han Dynasty and unearthed from Hei Shui Kuo. This vessel is made of grey unglazed

⁶⁹ 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China', *The Press*.

⁷⁰ Ralph Riccalton, 'Notes on Ceramic Collections at Canterbury Museum' *AGMANZ News* 143, September 1983, pg.9, 'The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artifacts at Canterbury Museum', undated, CMR, Fine Arts 6/7, Box 31, Folder 82.

earthenware and has a globular shaped body which tapers toward a flat base, with a long neck which flares slightly at the top. There are a series of horizontal lines in relief around the middle of the body, just below the neck, and just below the opening at the top, around the outside of the object. There are two faux ring handles with a pattern modelled above in relief on either side of the base of the neck. According to museum records, C1947.2 was delivered on behalf of Rewi Alley to Canterbury Museum in 1947 by Miss Adlam of the Friend's Ambulance:

Through Miss Adlam and Mr. John Johnson of the Friends Ambulance, we have received from Rewi Alley this year a number of old pieces, namely two large Han pots and a model brazier in terra cotta, and a Nestorian vase...⁷¹

There is a similar item to C1947.2, also classified as a pot/wine jar, from the Zhou period (fig.12). Like C1947.2, this vessel is a globular shape, with a short neck and outward turning rim. Moreover, it features the same linear pattern in a band near the base of the object. However, in this case, the lines are horizontal rather than vertical. Another vessel, which is a similar shape to both C1947.2 and C1947.1 is a Han Dynasty jar from Los Angeles County Museum (fig.13). Its design, however, is more akin to C1947.1, in that it has the same series of horizontal lines in relief in bands around the outside, and has handles on either side on the upper part of the vessel. A vessel almost identical to C1947.1 is that of the later Han Dynasty, excavated from the Loyang region, and also used to store grain or wine (fig.14). Not only is this vessel the same shape, with a globular shaped body and long, thin neck, it also has the same series of horizontal lines in relief on its surface, and carved details on either side just under the neck, which would most likely have originally had faux ring handles connected. Thus, given the written evidence provided by Canterbury Museum, and through comparison to similar vessels, C1947.2 and C1947.1 can both be identified as storage vessels.

⁷¹ Letter from Roger Duff to Rewi Alley, 30/5/1947, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

The terracotta model stove/brazier referred to in the Duff-Alley letter of 30 May, 1947 and acquired at the same time as the two vessels (C1947.2 and C1947.1), and also from Hei Shui Kuo, is item C1947.3 (fig.15&16) of the Rewi Alley Collection. It is also mentioned in the article 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China' which identifies it as being from the Han Dynasty.⁷² In his diary entry of October 21st 1945, Johnson recorded his meeting with Alley in Shantung when Alley gave him the stove to send back to New Zealand, and describes the stove as being 'very valuable'. In a later entry, when mentioning the use and purpose of the acquisitions (C1947.2, C1947.1, and C1947.3), he notes that the stove was intended 'for spirits to use'.⁷³ According to Qinghua Guo, pottery models of stoves, along with granaries, were the most common funerary objects in the Han Dynasty.⁷⁴ Models of stoves for burial objects in the Han Dynasty usually adhered to one of two forms, that is, either quadrangular, or shaped like an elongated horseshoe.⁷⁵ C1947.3 adheres to the quadrangular form, being rectangular in shape, and has a large aperture in the front to allow for draught and clearing ash, with three cooking holes, each covered in with a bowl underneath. At one end of the object is a raised edge to act as a guard to stop pots or vessels from falling off the surface.

Another example of a Terracotta stove is one from the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, in Stockholm (fig.17). This model is also of the Han Dynasty and of rectangular shape, but unlike C1947.3, only has two cooking holes. What also differs is that the guard at one end of the object is considerably higher and the base is much deeper. As opposed to C1947.3, the base appears to be complete, with the aperture for clearing ash in the front being a complete square hole rather than a slot. This deep base with a complete aperture is also evident in another Han Dynasty model stove from the American Museum of Natural

⁷² 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China', *The Press*.

⁷³ Diary of John Johnson, 21/10/1945, Private Collection of Mrs N. Johnson.

⁷⁴ Guo, pg.86.

⁷⁵ Berthold Laufer, *Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty (2nd Edition)*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., Japan, 1962, pg.80.

History (fig.18), which suggests that perhaps some of the base of C1947.3 is missing or has broken off. In addition, fig.18 has a shelf which extends from the main part of the object around the aperture, and the whole object is on feet which raise it off the ground. Unlike C1947.3 and fig.17, fig.18 is an example of the elongated horseshoe type of stove shape, as opposed to the quadrangular form of the other two. Both fig.17 and fig.18 have various patterns and details incised into the surface of the stove, whereas C1947.3 is completely plain, so it may also be the case that C1947.3 is just a simpler design, not necessarily with any parts missing.

Figures

In the Rewi Alley Collection, there are a wide variety of burial figures which are engaged in various activities and occupy various roles. All of these items fall into one of three categories: entertainers, attendants, or guardians, the order in which they are discussed below. Such figures are most commonly replicas of entities who had entertained, served, or protected and given guidance to the deceased in their previous life, so that they could carry on their duties to the deceased in the afterlife, and assure the entertainment and welfare of the *po* in the tomb. There are also some figures from the Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.) representing entertainers, which are worthwhile to discuss and compare to the various Han examples, as they help to give a more complete account of burial objects representing entertainers, attendants, and guardians, and illustrate characteristics also evident in Han Dynasty objects.

Of the various burial objects representing entertainers in the Rewi Alley Collection is item C1965.9 (fig.19), an earthenware model of a drummer. According to museum records, it is based on a replica of a Han Dynasty object and was accessioned sometime just before 28/10/64, excavated from a tomb in Sichuan Province in the 1950s.⁷⁶ The museum describes the item as ‘a seated drummer in a jovial

⁷⁶ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1964-65, CMR, Fine Arts 7/4, Box 4.

attitude'. The figure is in a squatting position, with the right leg extended out in front, and the right arm raised. The left leg is bent and supporting a round drum which the figure is holding under the left arm. There is a hole in the right hand which is raised, indicating that there was once an object attached to the hand, most likely a drum stick. There are traces of red and blue pigment throughout the object, with a particularly vivid patch of red on the teeth. The figure is wearing a small hat and has an animated facial expression, with the eyes squinted and mouth open as if laughing. Comical caricatures of performers and entertainers were especially popular in Sichuan Province in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D),⁷⁷ and this item is most likely an example of such a type.

There are many other examples of burial objects almost identical to this caricature. One is a squatting drummer from the Eastern Han Dynasty of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (fig.20). Just like C1965.9, this figure assumes the same squatting position with the left leg bent, supporting a drum under the left arm, with the right leg and arm outstretched. Unlike C1965.9, this figure is complete, holding a drum stick in the hand, which confirms that the missing object from the right hand of C1965.9 is indeed a drum stick. Fig.20 is also wearing a hat in the same style as C1965.9 and has the same laughing expression. The only other notable difference between the two objects, other than the drum stick, is that fig.20 has a slightly more elongated body. Another example, from Xindu County Bureau of Cultural Antiquities (fig.21) is almost identical to C1965.9, with exactly the same physical build, clothing, expression, and posture. Like C1965.9, this figure also has the drum stick missing from the right hand. Drummers of this style represent a distinct 'type' of entertainer popular in the Han Dynasty, who specialised in a form of storytelling which was partly spoken and partly sung.⁷⁸ C1965.9, fig.20 and 21 each represent this type and this is what accounts for their jovial expressions, as they are singing. Thus, C1965.9 is a story-telling entertainer from the Han Dynasty, depicted singing and playing a drum.

⁷⁷ <http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/55083/figure-of-a-squatting-drummer> (Accessed August 4, 2015).

⁷⁸ <http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/55083/1/figure-of-a-squatting-drummer> (Accessed August 4, 2015).

Another example of a musician from the Rewi Alley Collection is C1956.656 (fig.22), from the Tang Dynasty, depicting a standing female figure playing a lute (*pipa*). Canterbury Museum describes this object as a 'Tomb figure. Lute player'. She is dressed in a long floor-length dress with narrow sleeves and a rounded collar, in a style that was popular in the Han Dynasty.⁷⁹ She wears shoes with upward pointing toes, showing the soles, and her hair is tied up on the top of her head. There are traces of red pigment throughout, which are particularly visible on the lute, the soles of the shoes, and the lips. Lines have been incised on the lute into the wet clay before firing to depict the strings of the instrument, and the eyes and eyebrows of the figure have been painted on in black pigment. This object displays characteristics typical of the Tang Dynasty, as burial objects at this time became more elaborate in form⁸⁰, as can be observed in the detailing of the figure.

Many characteristics of this figure can be observed in other burial objects representing female lute players from the Sui (581-618 A.D.) to the Tang Dynasty. For instance, there is an example of a standing female figure playing a lute from the Sui Dynasty, excavated from the tomb of Yu Hong in Shaanxi Province, now at the Jinyuan Bureau of Cultural Properties and Tourism (fig.23). This figure is wearing an ankle-length garment and is standing, holding a string instrument almost identical to that of C1956.656. According to James C.Y. Watt, the instrument this figure is holding is a *pipa* which is the name for a Chinese lute.⁸¹ Another figure is from the Museo D'Arte Orientale (fig.24). Although this figure is in a seated position, she is playing a *pipa*, just as fig.24 and C1956.656. Showing the most resemblance to C1956.656, however, is a standing female lute player from the Sui Dynasty (Fig.25.). Not only is this figure wearing a long floor-length dress and playing a *pipa*, but she also displays a similar fancy hairstyle

⁷⁹ Cao Yin (ed.), *A Silk Road Saga: The Sarcophagus of Yu Hong*, Art Gallery New South Wales, 2013, pg.68.

⁸⁰ Hajek & Forman, pg.33.

⁸¹ James C.Y. Watt, *China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 AD*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2013, pg.283.

to C1956.656, with the hair piled up on top of the head. Therefore, through comparison to similar figures, C1956.656 can be confirmed to be a standing female figure playing a *pipa* Chinese lute.

Besides entertainers, C1956.228 is a standing male figure in the Rewi Alley Collection (fig.26), also of the Tang Dynasty. The Museum describes this object as a 'Standing man, in costume', which indicates that the figure is representative of a person of some role or occupation. The figure is standing with feet together, and both hands in fists. The right arm is bent at the elbow and held across the torso, and the left arm is held close against the figure's left side. He is wearing a knee-length garment, secured just below the waist by a belt, with trousers and knee-high boots. On his head he is wearing some sort of hat or cap which sits up towards the back of the head and covers the forehead and ears. The facial features have been carved in fairly high relief, rendering the eyebrows, closed eyes, nose and mouth, in a way that portrays a composed facial expression. There are traces of yellow, red and a bluish pigment throughout, suggesting that the figure was originally colourfully painted.

There is a figure of a man from the Tang Dynasty, excavated from the tomb of Yuan Shao in the Loyang area (Fig.27) which displays some very similar characteristics to C1956.228. The man is in a standing position and is wearing a V-neck knee-length garment which is tied with a belt around the waist. He also wears a very similar hat to C1956.228 with a cap that fits tight across the forehead and crown of the head, and a higher piece at the back of the head. The only notable difference between the two figures is that Fig.27 has his arms at his sides. An example of a figure with its arms and hands in the same position as C1956.228 is a figure of a man, also from the Tang Dynasty (Fig.28). Where C1956.228 has the right arm bent and the left at his side, this figure mirrors this posture with the left arm bent, and the right at its side. Also like C1956.228, both of the figure's hands are in fists. Fig.28 wears the same V-neck, knee-length garment as C1956.228 which ties with a belt just below the waist, with boots, and exactly the same cap.

The clothing and head gear of C1956.228 is very similar to that of two Han Dynasty peasants (fig.29). These figures are both wearing V-neck, knee-length garments, secured by a belt, with trousers and boots. They have a type of headdress consisting of a cap which covers the ears and secures around the chin. This is quite similar to the cap worn by C1956.228, although it does not extend under the chin. Another example of a similar headdress, yet slightly different again, is that of two soldier attendants from the tomb of Yang Sixu in Shaanxi Province (fig.30). Like C1956.228, these two figures have their hair piled on top of their heads and covered by some sort of cap which fits snugly just above the ears, and sits flat across the top of the head and forehead. In addition, they both wear knee-length garments tied around the waist, with trousers and boots.

Thus, by comparison to similar figures which are also described as figures of men, with no reference to any particular role or occupation, C1956.228 can be identified as a figure of a standing man, who, given his posture, may be a servant or attendant, but this is uncertain.

In addition to C1956.228, there are a number of other figures in the Rewi Alley Collection which resemble guardians of spiritual or supernatural form. Since spiritual guides were consulted in the earthly realm for matters concerning the spirits and the regulation of them, in and between the various realms, it was considered necessary that such beings were made available in the afterlife also. Thus, models of spiritual guides and figures with spiritual qualities were replicated for the tomb, with the primary function to guard the spirit of the deceased.

There are two figures in the Rewi Alley Collection which represent spirit guardian beings, and both are characterised by a combination of human and animal forms. One of these is C1956.233 (fig.31), from the Tang Dynasty, which depicts a figure with a human body and animal head wearing a long floor-length

robe with wide, hanging sleeves. The figure is identified by the Museum as representing the dog, one of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac. The robe of this figure features the distinctive three colour *sancai* glaze (usually consisting of brown, blue, and green), which became popular in the Tang Dynasty.⁸² The head and neck of the figure is unglazed, with some traces of black and red pigment which has been painted on, to colour the facial details. Sets of figures with human bodies and heads representing the twelve animal zodiac signs were common subjects for burial objects. Sets of the twelve animals are symbolic of the twelve year calendar cycle, the twelve two hour periods of the day, as well as the twelve divisions of the sky and the compass. They also relate to various philosophical ideas of the Han Dynasty, such as the principles of Yin and Yang and to the five elements, and when in their sequential order are thought to possess the power of regeneration, hence their popularity for reproduction as burial objects.⁸³

An example of such objects is a set of twelve figures (each representative of one of the twelve zodiac animals: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, pig), of the Tang Dynasty, from Shaanxi History Museum (fig.32). Although the figures do not have a *sancai* glaze, each figure has a human body and animal head, and is wearing the same floor length, wide-sleeved robe as C1956.233.

There is another set of the twelve zodiac animals at the Metropolitan Museum, also of the Tang Dynasty (fig.33), and all of these figures, like those in fig.32, and C1956.233, have animal heads, human bodies, and long, floor-length robes. Therefore, through comparison to other similar sets of burial figures representing the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac, C1956.233 can be confirmed as deriving from a set of figures depicting the twelve signs of the zodiac, and is the one from this set which is representative of the dog.

⁸² Hajek & Forman, pg.44, Watt, pg.41.

⁸³ <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/49381> (Accessed August 4, 2015).

C1956.232 (fig.34) from the Rewi Alley Collection, represents a sort of spirit guardian of human-beast form. There is no description provided by the Museum on this item. The figure is in a squatting position and has a human-like head and an animal-type body with hoofed feet. It has bulbous eyes, large animal-like ears and an unusual peaked shape extending from the top of its head. The head appears to be unglazed, but there is a *sancai* glaze of brown and green dripped down the front of the body, with plain brown on the back, and red and black pigment to colour the mouth and eyes. Such guardian figures were designed specifically for the tomb to guard the spirit of the deceased and ward off evil spirits. They were often the largest of all burial objects and were most often placed at the entrance to the tomb, as were fearsome Buddhist guardians in the Tang Dynasty, which served the same purpose.⁸⁴ According to Carol Michaelson and Jane Portal, these hoofed, and often winged figures have been referred to as ‘thunder monsters’.⁸⁵ Such figures were most common in the northern regions of China, where people were more concerned with demons, spirits, and shamanistic beliefs, and thus, efforts to protect the dead.⁸⁶

There are many other examples of figures just like this one, such as a tomb guardian figure, also from the Tang Dynasty (fig.35). Like C1956.232, this figure is in a squatting position, with a human head and animal body. It has a green, brown, and yellow *sancai* glaze and has the same bulbous eyes, except it is winged, has much larger ears, and a more elaborate projection from its head. Another example, also slightly more elaborate in form, is a man-lion tomb guardian from the Institute of Fine Arts in Chicago (Fig.36). Although this figure is more detailed than C1956.232, it nonetheless displays the same hoofed, animal body with a *sancai* glaze, large ears, protrusion from the top of its head, and fearsome facial expression. Thus, C1956.232 can be identified as a part human, part animal tomb guardian.

⁸⁴ Carol Michaelson & Jane Portal, *Chinese art in detail*, Harvard University Press, 2006, pg.14, Watt, pg.17, 28, 140.

⁸⁵ Watt, pg.242.

⁸⁶ Ibid, pg.17.

Items for the *hun* and identification of examples from the Rewi Alley Collection

Horses

Horses held a prominent position in Han society as they were useful for agricultural purposes and transportation. Therefore, they were popular models for burial objects as they contributed to creating a familiar environment for the *po* in the tomb.⁸⁷ More importantly, however, since horses were considered an apt mode of transport in the worldly realm, they were also considered as such in the otherworldly realm, and to assist the *hun* in its transition to the afterlife.⁸⁸ Horses which were considered to fulfil this role were models of a particular breed of horse which came from Ferghana, the capital of Fergana Province in eastern Uzbekistan, at the southern edge of the Fergana Valley in southern Central Asia. Ferghana horses were acquired from Central Asia and introduced to the court of Han Wudi (141-87 B.C.) from around the turn of the first century B.C. as a result of military expeditions, but also for their symbolic and religious significance.⁸⁹ Referred to as the ‘Heavenly Horses of Ferghana’ or *tianma*, these horses were thought to have mystical qualities and to be able to assist communication between man and the immortals,⁹⁰ hence their value to the *hun* in connecting the worldly and otherworldly realms. Ferghana or *tianma* horses can be distinguished from other horses by physical characteristics such as a solid build, long neck, deep chest, and well developed haunches. In addition, they are usually depicted with pricked ears, flared nostrils, mouth partly open, and head tilting downwards.

There are a wide variety of burial objects representing horses in the Rewi Alley Collection. For instance, item EX1999.80 (fig.37) is an earthenware horse head from the Han Dynasty. It has been severed just above the chest and consists of the head and neck. The Museum have noted in the description of this item

⁸⁷ Loewe, 1982, pg.123-124.

⁸⁸ Grousset, pg.94, Hay, pg.46, Wu, 2009, pg.32.

⁸⁹ William J. Duiker & Jackson J. Spielvogel, *The Essential World History, Sixth Edition, Volume 1*, Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011, pg.128, Roel Sterckx, *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, SUNY Press, 2002, pg.184.

⁹⁰ Yu, pg.98, Tan, pg.11, Sterckx, pg.184.

that the horse has a bridle, pricked ears, and open mouth,⁹¹ which are typical physical characteristics of a Ferghana horse. Between the Han and Tang Dynasties earthenware figures of horses commonly had detachable heads,⁹² but given the jagged base of this horse head it is most likely it has broken off a body rather than been crafted as a free-standing head. To compare, the head of a pottery prancing horse and that of two fighting horses from the Tang Dynasty (which are still part of the body) (fig.38) are very similar to EX1999.80. Like EX1999.80, they have bridles, ears pricked, mouths open, and heads tilting downwards, so it is likely that EX1999.80 may have once belonged to a body of a horse similar to those in fig.38.

There is a horse head in the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig.39) which has been severed at the neck in the same place as EX1999.80, however the base has been smoothed and neatly rounded off. This horse also displays Ferghana characteristics of pricked ears, flared nostrils, and an open mouth. Furthermore, according to the 'Legend of *Tianma*', the *tianma* (or Ferghana) horse was said to sweat blood at the end of its journey. Consequently, many *tianma* horses were made of terracotta or coloured in red to reference this legend.⁹³ This horse shows traces of red pigment, which also indicate that it is a Fergana horse. Therefore, given that fig.39 can be confirmed to be representative of a Ferghana horse and shows physical characteristics of that type, also displayed by EX1999.80, EX1999.80 can be identified as the head of a model of a horse representative of the Ferghana breed.

Another variation of a horse in the Rewi Alley Collection is C1956.219 (fig.40) from the Han Dynasty, described by the Museum as being made of 'reddish earthenware' in the form of a 'saddled horse'.⁹⁴ It has short legs, a long neck, and a plump, elongated body. There are details incised around the edge of the

⁹¹ 'China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy' <http://ucomeka1p.canterbury.ac.nz/items/show/345> (Accessed August 4, 2015).

⁹² Ashton & Gray, pg.88.

⁹³ Li He, *Chinese Ceramics: A New Comprehensive Survey from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco*, Random House Incorporated, 1996, pg.42.

⁹⁴ 'China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy' <http://ucomeka1p.canterbury.ac.nz/items/show/526> (Accessed August 4, 2015).

saddle and around the eyes, and there is an inscription on the pommel at the back of the saddle. It has a pointed horn on the bridge of its nose and an unusual horn-like form extending from its forehead. This horse bears resemblance to a *qilin* Chinese unicorn, which evolved from *Zhi*, the mythical Chinese goat-unicorn.⁹⁵ In the Han Dynasty the rhinoceros was an auspicious animal associated with longevity, and its horn was thought to have magical powers. Therefore, the rhinoceros became mythical and evolved into a unicorn form based on *Zhi*.⁹⁶ From this form, the unicorn horse developed, and this is what accounts for their short, stumpy build. Some representations of horse-unicorns have wisps of cloud or incense decorating their bodies, which, according to Jeannie Thomas Parker, identifies them as belonging to the supernatural realm. She asserts that being ‘Transient and evanescent as clouds or incense, these auspicious mythic animals became linked to the divine world of the spirit and the cosmos during the late Warring States and Han Dynasty in China.’⁹⁷ Therefore, these entities served a similar purpose to Ferghana horses in their ability to connect and traverse the worldly and otherworldly realms.

An example almost identical to C1956.219 is what is titled as a ‘pottery standing horse’ from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) (fig.41). Like C1956.219, this horse has the same build, with short legs, and a plump, elongated body. It also has a very similar saddle, and the same horn-like form extending from its forehead. Another example, which is remarkably similar to both C1956.219 and fig.41 is a model of a unicorn horse from the Barakat Collection in the United States (Fig.42). Again, it has the same solid build, short legs, saddle, and horn-like forms protruding from the bridge of its nose and forehead. The horn on the bridge of the nose of fig.42, and extending from the foreheads of both C1956.219 and fig.41, are the horns of a unicorn. This, in combination with other physical characteristics, identifies both examples as unicorn horses. There is a wispy, spiral-like pattern incised in a border around the outside of the saddle of

⁹⁵ Brenda Rosen, *The Mythical Creatures Bible: The Definitive Guide to Legendary Beings*, Octopus Publishing Group, 2008, pg.73.

⁹⁶ Clive Walker & Anton Walker, *The Rhino Keepers*, Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd., South Africa, 2012, pg.4, Jeannie Thomas Parker, *The Mythic Chinese Unicorn*, Friesen Press, Canada, 2013, pg.153.

⁹⁷ Parker, pg.153.

C1956.219, which are likely to be representative of incense or clouds, as referred to above by Parker.

Therefore, given the evidence regarding unicorn horses, and by comparison to other examples, C1956.219 can be identified as a *qilin* unicorn-horse, as having evolved from the mythical goat-unicorn *Zhi*.

In conclusion, the various examples from the Rewi Alley Collection, as discussed above, give an account of the various utilitarian items, figures, and animals which were either replicated in the form of *mingqi* burial objects, or placed in the tomb to provide for the needs of the spirit of the deceased, and thus to maintain harmony between the different realms. By comparing the examples in the Rewi Alley Collection with similar items in other collections around the world, this places the Alley objects in their wider context, allows for the identification of standard characteristics of Han Dynasty burial objects, and aspects of society of that time which the objects represent. The examples from the Tang Dynasty are useful to give this context as they show that although the styles of the objects became more elaborate, the subjects remained the same as those in the Han Dynasty. Through providing models of utilitarian items such as granaries, pots, and stoves, and figures such as entertainers, attendants, and tomb guardians, which were familiar to the deceased from their previous life, this guaranteed the welfare and contentment of the *po* in the tomb, so that it would not desire to return and cause interference in the living realm. The provision of such items also meant that the deceased could live on in the tomb as it had been accustomed to in the worldly realm. The safety and security of the *po* was assured by tomb guardians who could guard against interfering spirits in the tomb, and the welfare of the *hun* was accounted for by *tianma* and unicorn horses which provided it with the necessary assistance to ascend to the afterlife, and when it reached its destination, to travel around within it. Thus, through providing for the needs and requirements of both the *po* and the *hun*, and assuring their comfort and contentment in their respective realms, burial objects assured harmony for both the living and the dead.

Chapter Two: The Ontological and Theoretical Complexities of Burial Objects in Museums

Objects intended for burial which have been excavated undergo one of the most significant changes in meaning and value as they were not intended to be seen by a living audience, but end up being accessioned to a museum where one of their primary purposes is to be looked at.¹ The display of Chinese burial objects in museums raises a range of ethical and hermeneutical issues, some of which I will discuss in this chapter. As material objects, Chinese burial objects have certain meanings, which are transformed to some extent by different contexts. According to Donald Preziosi, in the museum, objects become ‘museologised’ and subjected to various processes of classification and categorisation which result in various ontological shifts for the object.² The primary implication of this for Chinese burial objects is that it causes them to be seen and interpreted by an audience, as opposed to them functioning solely for the dead, as had been intended in their original context. I will therefore consider the implications of displaying these objects, which involves a discussion of the theme of death, memory, ethics, and sacrality, and how these concepts operate and can be engaged with in the museum. Of particular relevance to this discussion is how these concerns draw on the original meaning and signification of the objects in their initial context, yet also cause them to be interpreted in new ways.

Bill Brown defines material objects as ‘things’, which are humanly wrought items that assist people in their daily lives and their various physical, social, cultural, and spiritual pursuits.³ Christopher Tilley observes that such things are related to physical and economic well-being and therefore have tangible

¹ Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pg.24.

² Donald Preziosi ‘Brain of the Earth’s Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity’ in Paul Duro (ed.), *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg.103-104.

³ Bill Brown (ed.), *Things*, University of Chicago Press, USA, 2004, pg.4, Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘The Significance of the Artifact’, *Geographical Review*, Vol.70, No.4 (Oct. 1980), pg.462, Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, Routledge, London; New York, 1994, pg.9.

benefits for persons.⁴ According to Ronald T. Marchese, ‘...artifacts, as the material remains of culture, symbolise human behavior and the mental processes which motivate society.’⁵ Similarly, Susan Pearce argues that although there are various terms which can be used to refer to material objects, such as ‘thing’, ‘specimen’, or ‘artefact’, what is common between all material objects is that they have been ascribed with cultural value.⁶ Material objects are, therefore, like extensions or embodiments of the people who made them,⁷ which, David Parkin claims is like a sort of ‘socio-material prosthesis’.⁸ Material objects are items made to serve a particular use or purpose within a particular culture or society. Consequently, they can be understood as historical documents, which is especially the case, as Susan Crane points out, in regard to archaeological or excavated objects.⁹ In this way, burial objects, like other objects, are functional, and can be understood as expressions or products of the particular mind sets and ways of life of groups of people or cultures.¹⁰ Chinese burial objects were crafted in response to particular philosophical beliefs about death and the afterlife in Han Dynasty China, many of them being created specifically for the deceased, to be buried with them in order to sustain them in the afterlife.

Although certain belief systems or mindsets of particular cultures may not persist, the objects or artefacts created in relation to them often do, so the objects serve to preserve in material form cultures, belief systems and the like that may no longer exist.¹¹ If there is no record of where an object has come from, what it is, or what connotations and significance it had in a previous context, such details can sometimes

⁴ Christopher Tilley, et al, *Handbook of Material Culture*, Sage Publication Ltd., 2013, pg.3.

⁵ Ronald T. Marchese, 'Material Culture and Artifact Classification', *Journal of American Culture*, Vol.3, No.4, December 1980, pp.605-618, pg.607.

⁶ Pearce, pg.9.

⁷ Richard Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol.35, No.4 (Spring 2005), pg.591-592.

⁸ Elizabeth Hallam & Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory & Material Culture*, Berg, Oxford; New York, 2001, pg.42.

⁹ Susan A. Crane (ed.), *Museums and Memory*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, pg.32.

¹⁰ Edward P. Alexander & Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums (2nd edition)*, AltaMira Press, UK, 2008, pg.194, Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, 'It's a Material World: History, Artifacts, and Anthropology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.32 (2003), pg.207, Marchese, pg.605, Gell, pg.23.

¹¹ Tilley, et al, pg.2, James Beattie & Lauren Murray, *Mapping The Social Lives of Objects: Popular and Artistic Responses to the 1937 Exhibition of Chinese Art in New Zealand*, <http://www.eastasianhistory.org/37/beattie-murray> (Accessed May 2, 2016).

be deciphered from the physical characteristics of the object.¹² This physical persistence is particularly pertinent to Chinese burial objects, since they were created out of a desire to extend the life of the deceased beyond that of their biological body.¹³

However, although material objects can be semi-permanent and often exist beyond the life of those who use them, this also means that they go on to be used by different people and circulated in different contexts. While an object has particular meanings and associations in one context, these are likely to be altered by a different context.¹⁴ As Hallam and Hockey observe:

Whilst material objects retain a certain historical specificity, rooted in their production within a particular historical moment, we witness their varied uses at later stages of their social lives. Moving (being transported, translated) from one cultural or temporal zone to another, objects are re-contextualized and made to mean in different ways.¹⁵

Thus, any object which has been removed from its original context and transplanted to another is susceptible to undergo this ontological transformation.

Burial objects and Museums

One of the most significant events in the life of an object is when it is acquired, interpreted, and displayed in the context of the museum. Samuel J. M. M. Alberti argues that material culture has a 'life' or 'career' and the point in this life or career which is most 'fruitful' for an object of material culture (besides in its original context) is within the museum.¹⁶ Alberti claims that when an object is collected, this is '...but the

¹² Grassby, pg.602.

¹³ Hallam & Hockey, pg.42.

¹⁴ Brown, pg.9, Hallam & Hockey, pg.81-82, 131, Brumfiel, pg.207-208, Tilley, et al, pg.9, Myrian Sepulveda dos Santos, 'Museums and Memory: The Enchanted Modernity', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 2003, 7:1, pg.40.

¹⁵ Hallam & Hockey, pg.7-8.

¹⁶ Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, 'Objects and the Museum', *Isis*, Vol.96, No.4 (December 2005), pg.560.

first in a convoluted series of meaning and context shifts' in store for the object.¹⁷ For instance, according to Alberti, prior to becoming part of a museum collection, an object typically passes through a number of private dealers and collectors, and in many cases, is eventually gifted to the museum by one of these dealers or collectors. This means that the object then becomes associated with that donor and the donor becomes part of its identity and value in the museum context.¹⁸ The Rewi Alley Collection, which many Chinese burial objects at Canterbury Museum belong to, is a good example of objects being ascribed with new value and significance upon entering the museum context through being associated, and in this case, named after their donor, even though this is irrelevant to the original provenance, meaning and purpose of the objects.

Once in the museum, the material object undergoes various alterations as the result of practices of 'museology'.¹⁹ As mentioned earlier, the museum transforms objects into 'museological' material, distinguishing them from other 'un-museologised' objects which are not part of a museum, a process which Preziosi describes as 'museologisation'.²⁰ Similarly, Peter Vergo claims that, in this process, 'every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object or work of art, together with other objects or works of art, within the context of a temporary exhibition or museum display means placing a certain construction upon history.'²¹ The museum is therefore, as David Lowenthal suggests, a contrived space set aside for a particular kind of attention.²² Likewise, Wolfgang Ernst considers the museum as a sort of framing device which adds to objects and causes them to be seen in a different way. To him, 'as a contextualizing device it is to its collections what the picture frame is to a picture.'²³ Lowenthal argues that relics undergo two

¹⁷ Alberti, pg.562, 565.

¹⁸ Alberti, pg.564-565, Grassby, pg.595-596, Mark O'Neill, 'Museums and Mortality', in *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief*, Vol.8, Issue 1, 2012, pg.66, Calum Storrie, *The Delirious Museum: A Journey from the Louvre to Las Vegas*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2006, pg.121-122.

¹⁹ Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 1989, pg.1.

²⁰ Preziosi in Duro (ed), pg.103-104.

²¹ Vergo, pg.2-3.

²² David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pg.265.

²³ Wolfgang Ernst, 'Framing the Fragment: Archaeology, Art, Museum' in Duro (ed.), pg.114-115.

types of transformation: physically, through change of locale and alterations to physical form over time, and secondly through how they are interpreted.²⁴ Museological processes often account for both of these transformations. For instance, conservation practices can alter or ‘enhance’ the physical form of the object, and classification, categorisation, and various modes of display cause the object to be interpreted in different ways. However, I do not think that considering the physical and hermeneutical transformations separately, as Lowenthal does, is the best approach. With any physical alteration there naturally comes an ontological one, which in turn affects how the object is interpreted, so I would argue that the two are connected and one follows, or influences, the other.

Thus, in order for objects to become part of a museum collection and to be subsequently displayed, a process of classification, categorisation, and selection is required, where objects are arranged according to certain categories of type.²⁵ Hallam and Hockey discuss how an object is usually first ascribed meaning as a personalised object, but this often shifts to becoming more generalised as the object moves through different contexts.²⁶ For instance, in the ‘Western’ museum context, objects are typically referred to as ‘specimens’, irrespective of their meaning or provenance.²⁷ Such a process occurs when an object is accessioned to a museum, and, as Mark Sandberg describes, in this situation the existing value of the object is transformed into ‘display value’: ‘When moved, all such objects lose something of their original value, and in exchange gain display value in the new context of the collection.’²⁸ While an object may have its own signification and importance as an individual entity, in the museum it is not the object itself, but the object in combination with other similar objects, related text, and certain modes of display which

²⁴ Lowenthal, pg.264.

²⁵ Marchese, pg.610, Pearce, pg.10, Ludmilla Jordanova ‘Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums’ in Vergo (ed), pg.23.

²⁶ Hallam & Hockey, pg.124, Grassby, pg.597-598, Vergo, pg.8, Jordanova in Vergo (ed.), pg.48, Lowenthal, pg.349-350, Preziosi in Duro, pg.107.

²⁷ Michael Willis in Bruce M. Sullivan (ed.), *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015, pg.148-149.

²⁸ Mark Sandberg in Alexander, pg.187, Pearce, pg.2, Ernst in Duro (ed.), pg.115, Lowenthal, pg.289.

creates much of its identity.²⁹ For instance, even if there is some knowledge of the provenance of an object, this can be limited, and each object, although part of a group, may have had a different use or purpose (such as items intended for use by the *po* as opposed to the *hun*, in the case of Chinese burial objects), but these details are often disregarded in favour of an aesthetically coherent display.³⁰ Chinese burial objects were first crafted or placed in the tomb for an individual person in regard to what was peculiar to them, but through being excavated and becoming part of a museum collection, this distinguishing characteristic can become much more generalised, resulting in the objects becoming representative of death and burial practices in China, or, more generally, artistic practice in the Han Dynasty. Thus, information which is left out as a result of generalisation can lead to misrepresentation.

Consequently, in the museum, an object is viewed out of its original context and often with insufficient description of its original meaning and significance.³¹ Crane observes that museum objects essentially become vessels for the creation of meaningful messages about ‘us, them, and the museum’.³² According to Vergo:

In the acquisition of material, of whatever kind, let alone in putting that material on public display or making it publicly accessible, museums make certain choices determined by judgements as to value, significance, or monetary worth, judgements which may derive in part from the system of values peculiar to the institution itself, but which in a more profound sense are also rooted in our education, our upbringing, our prejudices.³³

²⁹ Vergo, pg.54.

³⁰ Grassby, pg.597-598.

³¹ Sanchita Balachandran, ‘Among the Dead and their Possessions; A Conservator’s role in the Death, Life, and Afterlife of Human Remains and their Associated Objects’, *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall/Winter 2009), pg.119, Preziosi in Duro, pg.105-106, Vergo, pg.2, Norman Palmer, ‘Museums and Cultural Property’ in Vergo (ed), pg.173-174, Lowenthal, pg.xxiii, 36, 271, 282.

³² Crane, pg.5.

³³ Vergo, pg.2.

So, museum displays are influenced by the societal and cultural underpinnings of the place and the people who are constructing them. Given these circumstances, museum exhibits and objects are arranged to appeal to the perceived audience who will view them.³⁴ The ‘frame’ of the museum can be manipulated to suit the intended reception of an object,³⁵ and through various methods of display, the curator can control the amount of information the viewer is given about the object, and influence how they are to understand, interpret, and engage with it.³⁶ For example, even though Chinese burial objects were intended for the use of the deceased and to remain buried, they can be displayed in such a way which makes no reference to this, so that they are more relatable to a living audience.

There has sometimes been Eurocentric attitudes expressed toward ‘Asian’ cultures and their associated objects, which influenced how they were collected and displayed. A contributing factor to Chinese objects being treated in this way in the museum context had to do with the rapid rise of economic power in Western Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when this area began to dominate the global circulation of goods, redefine the politico-cultural definitions of Asia, and render it as a cultural ‘other’.³⁷ In the twentieth century, the activities of dealers and galleries formed the basis upon which European standards of taste for Chinese objects were established,³⁸ and the display of Chinese objects in ‘Western’ museums and the appreciation of them was highly influenced by Eurocentric notions of taste and beauty. For instance, an appreciation for the aesthetic characteristics of an object were of greatest consideration, at the expense of their cultural meaning and value, and how well these accorded with

³⁴ Tuan, pg.471-472, Lowenthal, pg.332, Vergo, pg.3, Charles Saumarez Smith, ‘Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings’ in Vergo (ed), pg.12.

³⁵ Gell, pg.24.

³⁶ Hallam & Hockey, pg.124, Alexander, pg.12, 325, Alberti, pg.569, Balachandran, pg.203, Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: inside public art museums*, Routledge, 1995, pg.17, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, Routledge, London, 2000, pg.3, Jordanova in Vergo (ed), pg.45-46, Ernst in Duro (ed.), pg.132, Lowenthal, pg.288.

³⁷ Vimalin Rujivacharakul (ed.), *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting*, University of Delaware Press, The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., UK, 2011, pg.24-25, Audrey Wang, *Chinese Antiquities: An Introduction to the Art Market*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012, pg.103.

³⁸ Rujivacharakul, pg.26, Warren I. Cohen, ‘Art Collecting as International Relations: Chinese Art and American Culture’, *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.1, No.4, Winter 1992, pg.413-414.

established ‘Western’ aesthetic preferences. According to the *American Museum Journal* in 1913, aesthetic appeal or ‘beauty’ was thought to be essential to any display, as this was considered to be attractive and instructive to the widest variety of people, and no scientific training or background was required to appreciate the exhibit.³⁹ George Eumorfopoulos, speaking of Chinese burial objects, noted that:

‘...it was in 1906 that I saw for the first time a few specimens of the tomb wares and I was at once attracted by them. Archaeological appeal alone, however, has never induced me to acquire an object: to enter my collection it was indispensable that it should at the same time appeal to me aesthetically in some way or another.’⁴⁰

Thus, Chinese objects were collected and displayed according to the particular social and contextual characteristics and tendencies of the ‘West’.

Burial Objects, Museums, and Death

Death can significantly change the identity of an object, and death-related objects tend to have very specific meanings, values, and associations. In the case of most death-related objects, they only become death-related in association with having belonged to someone who has died, and were already in use by this person when they were alive. Certain Chinese burial objects as death-related objects are different, however, in that they were made specifically for the dead to be used by them in the afterlife, and were not intended to be seen by the living. Thus, it is not death which changes the signification of Chinese burial objects, but rather, the excavation and display of them in a museum context.

³⁹ Karen A. Rader & Victoria E.M. Cain, *Life on Display: Revolutionizing U.S. Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century*, University of Chicago Press, 2014, pg.57.

⁴⁰ George Eumorfopoulos in Judith Green ‘A New Orientation of Ideas’: Collecting and the Taste for Early Chinese Ceramics in England 1921-36’ in Stacey Pierson (ed.), *Collecting Chinese Art: Interpretation and Display*, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia No.20., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Percival David Foundation, 2000, pg.51.

Values associated with death and death-related objects can change, and what is defined as a ‘death object’ varies and changes according to different contexts. This flexibility allows objects associated with death to live on and have meaning in the present, even if the person the objects were created for or associated with is long gone.⁴¹ For instance, in their original context of the tomb, Chinese burial objects are death-related objects in relation to the deceased whom they belong to and are actively in use by them in this context. However, when unearthed, the objects still retain their death association as having been unearthed from the tomb of someone deceased, but cease to function in the same way since they are no longer physically located with the deceased.

Objects are often thought of as inanimate and ‘dead’ when not in use by human subjects, and only when they are being actively used and attributed with meaning and importance by human subjects, they are infused with life and become animate.⁴² Mark C. Taylor relates the museum to a graveyard, as a place which serves to ‘keep the *alive as dead*’.⁴³ However, according to Hallam and Hockey, through being subjected to museological processes such as classification and categorisation, museums have been accused of deadening or ‘executing’ the past life of death-related objects.⁴⁴ I would argue that in the context of the museum, whether they are associated with death or not, objects are ‘alive’ since they are being actively engaged with by a living audience. In these museological contexts, Chinese burial objects could be thought of as ‘dead’, having become divorced from their original context which animated them, but rather, the objects become infused with new life relevant to the new context. According to Mark O’Neill, the acquisition and circulation of grave goods in the modern ‘Western’ world, particularly those of other cultures, has changed them from being gifts from the living to the dead, to being gifts from the dead to the living.⁴⁵ Even though the dead cannot give permission, this is exactly what has happened to

⁴¹ Balachandran, pg.200, O’Neill, pg.179.

⁴² Tilley et al., pg.3.

⁴³ Mark C. Taylor in Storrie, pg.116-117, 128.

⁴⁴ Hallam & Hockey, pg.125, Grassby, pg.597-598.

⁴⁵ O’Neill, pg.57.

Chinese burial objects, which have been unearthed and displayed in museums. In their original context, they were considered gifts from the living to the dead and had the greatest usefulness for the dead.

However, in the museum context, they become valuable and useful to the living.

Through the related objects, the dead person is given an ‘afterlife’ in the contexts in which the objects circulate or are situated, which attributes them a sort of timelessness⁴⁶ in Eurocentric views, bridging the gap between past and present, life and death. Margaret Gibson claims that:

...certain symbolic continuities can remain as objects might continue to be thought of and named as belonging to former owners even though they are now worn by, used or in the possession of other people. Through death, the subject-object relationship enters into a new phase of distribution, attachment, ownership or custodianship and the question of value inevitably arises.⁴⁷

Similarly, Hallam and Hockey speak of ‘the capacity of material objects to bind the living and the dead, to hold a fragile connection across temporal distance and to preserve a material presence in the face of an embodied absence...’⁴⁸ So, although objects undergo ontological shifts between different contexts, they still retain their death association and therefore link the current with the former, provided that the relevant information is given in the display of the objects for the viewer to make this connection. Even though burial objects are supposed to remain in the tomb to assist the deceased in their afterlife in another realm, the display of them in the museum context gives them a sort of afterlife in the living realm also. Thus, although something associated with the original object is lost, through display it gains something else, in this case, a new life.

⁴⁶ Hallam & Hockey, pg.9, 104-105, Santos, pg.43, Tilley et al., pg.60, Leslie Bedford, ‘Musing about Time and Museums’, *Curator The Museum Journal*, Vol.55, No.4, October 2012, pg.393, George W. Stocking, Jr. (ed.), ‘Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture’, *History of Anthropology*, Vol.3, University of Wisconsin Press, USA, 1985, pg.4.

⁴⁷ Margaret Gibson, ‘Death and the Transformation of Objects and Their Value’, *Thesis Eleven*, 103 (1), SAGE Publications, 2010, pg.55.

⁴⁸ Hallam & Hockey, pg.18.

Thus, even though they were never intended to be witnessed by a living audience, in the living context, such as through being displayed in a museum, Chinese burial objects have a kind of anthropological purpose, to allow the deceased person or people of another culture to be remembered, as trace objects or remnants of deceased persons. As Elise Madeline Ciregna notes, the display of death-related objects such as grave goods from various different cultures ‘...present varied aspects and culturally different ways of memorializing death, dying, and bereavement throughout history.’⁴⁹ Similarly, Calum Storrie notes that ‘...when we are looking at particular museum artefacts, we are looking into the grave trying to understand those who have preceded us; engaging with them at the moment of their death.’⁵⁰ He also argues that death-related objects can be considered as *memento-mori*, or as being equivalent to ‘souvenirs’ of the dead through which the dead can be remembered.⁵¹ Chinese burial objects can be understood in this way, as ‘souvenirs’ of the deceased whom they belonged to. Moreover, the importance and worth of an object associated with, or which belonged to someone deceased, often increases after their death, in part because ‘people revere inanimate things which are remote from them and their lived past.’⁵² As Gibson claims, ‘this temporal-spatial splitting between the material remains that are deceased...and the material remains that are living on creates complex, hybridized forms of sacred bodily remains- particularly in terms of temporal and spatial localities.’⁵³ So, not only can Chinese burial objects represent the deceased from another time and culture, the curiosity surrounding this distance creates added significance or the objects in the museum context.

⁴⁹ Elise Madeleine Ciregna, ‘Museums of Death’ in Clifton D. Bryant and Dennis L. Peck (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience*, SAGE Publications, 2009, pg.8.

⁵⁰ Storrie, pg.112.

⁵¹ Ibid, pg.119.

⁵² Santos, pg.29, Tuan, pg.463, Gibson, pg.58, Hallam and Hockey, pg.50.

⁵³ Gibson, pg.62.

According to Hallam and Hockey, as reminders of the deceased, death-related objects serve to mediate our relationship with the dead, reminding us simultaneously of our own, as well as other's mortality.⁵⁴ Therefore, such objects mediate our relationship with death by reminding us of that which has died and also of our own impending death. Moreover, Andreas Huyssen claims that the only way we can interpret death-related objects in the present, devoid of their past associations and resonances, is in relation to our own perception of the past, death, and transitoriness.⁵⁵ So, in the context of the museum, Chinese burial objects can also be engaged with by a living audience according to people's own subjective experiences of them, in regard to their individual perceptions and understandings of death.

The detachment of the objects from their original context and purpose not only allows viewers their own subjective experience, but has also been argued to allow them a comfortable encounter with death.

According to Diana York Blaine, there are several ways in which modern 'Western' society interprets or deals with death, which provide ways for the viewer to feel in a superior position to the object, or allow them to transcend the notion of death altogether.⁵⁶ This is because, particularly in 'Western' societies, death tends to signify disorder and disarray, so by containing and controlling death and death-related objects in the museum, it becomes manageable and orderly.⁵⁷ Sanchita Balachandran asserts that in the modern 'Western' world, death is confronted more often in museums than it is on television or in films, as it is presented in a supposedly stable environment in a way that seeks to be detached and 'objective'.⁵⁸ She states that this is made possible because death and death-related objects

⁵⁴ Hallam & Hockey, pg.2, Storrie, pg.118.

⁵⁵ Santos, pg.33.

⁵⁶ Maria-Jose Blanco & Ricarda Vidal (eds.), *The Power of Death: Contemporary Reflections on Death in Western Society*, Beghahn Books, New York; Oxford, 2015, pg.154, 159-160.

⁵⁷ Tuan, pg.465, Blanco & Vidal, pg.13-14, 153-154.

⁵⁸ Balachandran, pg.200, O'Neill, pg.61, Blanco & Vidal, pg.157.

are usually safely displayed at some distance from the onlooker, or placed behind a protective physical and emotional boundary of Plexiglass, and separated from the viewer's own time by a wall label describing them as ancient or from a distant geographic region.⁵⁹

Therefore, modes of display, such as labelling and securing boundaries like plexiglass around an object, allow the viewer to feel comfortable in the presence of death objects. These are means by which to make death-related objects accessible and comprehensible to as wide an audience as possible, and the museum space is an allegedly stable environment in which to do so.

Burial Objects, Museums, and Memory

As mentioned above, death-related objects are indexes or repositories of memory, which act as reminders of the person(s) whom they belonged to. Memory is to a large extent collectively constructed, and the museum both constructs and preserves collective memories which viewers can join in, share, and make new ones from, in reference to the objects on display.

Since material objects are the product of particular cultures and societies and have the ability to carry meaning, they can also act as repositories of memory. The materiality of the object allows it to persist through time and different contexts,⁶⁰ and in the museum, its physical presence alerts us to memories which have been collected in that space. According to Parkin, material objects can 'embody personhood across time, acting as material markers for identity and memory'.⁶¹ Therefore, a material object can act as a kind of metaphor for memory, and through the material object, memories can be made tangible, accessible, and somewhat permanent.⁶² Since we attach personal meaning to objects and identify with

⁵⁹ Balachandran, pg.200.

⁶⁰ Lowenthal, pg.193, Hallam & Hockey, pg.48.

⁶¹ Hallam & Hockey, pg.180-181, Santos, pg.36-37.

⁶² Hallam & Hockey, pg.23, 26-27.

them, through repeated encounters with such objects, our sense of self is ensured, as through these tangible forms we are essentially ‘reminded’ of it. Hallam and Hockey argue that as familiar objects remind us of our own selfhood, foreign objects seek to remind us of the selfhood of others.⁶³ Since Chinese burial objects have been excavated and become part of museum collections, their memorial potential can be utilised. Through their material form they carry remnants, or a ‘memory’ of their original meaning and purpose, and act as reminders of the people and culture they are associated with.

Therefore, the materiality lends some degree of permanence to an object and protects against the total loss or forgetting of cultures and identities.⁶⁴ Hallam & Hockey observe that:

...when objects holding memories decay this indicates forgetting and, furthermore, that an important effect of memorial artefacts is to create a distinction between what should be remembered and what is to be forgotten.⁶⁵

So, without the object, memories of the person or culture it was associated with cannot be triggered and are, therefore, forgotten. The fact that death-related objects such as Chinese burial objects are preserved is indicative of the desire for the memories they carry to be preserved. Preserving and displaying such objects in a museum is a way to counter this forgetting. Moreover, for an object to become part of a museum collection, this means it is valued and ‘remembered’ institutionally.

Maurice Halbwachs argues that it is through membership of a social group that individuals are able to locate and recall memories, as memories rely on and are constructed based on certain ‘tools’ which a

⁶³ Ibid, pg.3-4, 25, 43, 124.

⁶⁴ Gibson, pg.61, Grassby, pg.595, Hallam & Hockey, pg.43, 49-50.

⁶⁵ Hallam & Hockey, pg.55.

collective or society possess and use.⁶⁶ Therefore, the process of reconstructing memory as a form of remembering aids social or collective memory, as it generalises the experience of things or events, and this generalisation makes it more comprehensible and liable to trigger another's memory or experience of the same thing, even if details may differ individually.⁶⁷ According to James V. Wertsch, 'collective frameworks...provide memory cues to individuals, cues that give rise to similar representations among the members of a group.'⁶⁸ Paul Connerton has a similar opinion, claiming that:

...we all come to know each other by asking for accounts, by giving accounts, by believing or disbelieving stories about each other's pasts and identities. In successfully identifying and understanding what someone else is doing we set a particular event or episode or way of behaving in the context of a number of narrative histories... We situate the agent's behaviour with reference to its place in their life history...and we situate that behaviour also with reference to its place in the history of the social settings to which they belong... it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity.⁶⁹

Thus, individual memories are dependent on collective memories and memory itself is collectively constructed and maintained, since its generation and evocation is dependent on social and cultural contexts.

Connerton argues that collective memory cannot exist 'without reference to a socially specific spatial framework', a place which needs to be relatively stable and fixed so as to allow the possibility of triggering and recalling past experiences and memories associated with or within that framework.⁷⁰ Such

⁶⁶ Maurice Halbwachs in James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pg.36.

⁶⁷ Santos, pg.38-39.

⁶⁸ Wertsch, pg.22.

⁶⁹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pg.21.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pg.37.

a space is the museum, which, according to Crane, functions as a storehouse or archive of memory.⁷¹ Preziosi claims that museums facilitate a process of ‘re-membering’ in the very way they function, by dismembering and reconstructing the members which constitute the past.⁷² Connerton asserts that remembering itself involves a process of construction, of ‘forming meaningful narrative sequences’, by integrating isolated events or phenomena into a single, unified whole.⁷³ Similarly, Wertsch claims that in the past several decades, research on the psychology of memory has revealed that ‘memory is more a matter of reorganizing, or reconstructing, bits of information into a general scheme than it is a matter of accurate recall of the isolated bits themselves.’⁷⁴ Therefore, the process of remembering is analogous to how museums function, by bringing together and arranging information, or in this case objects, to create meaningful narratives. So, memory operates in the museum on both a mental and physical level, involving remembering a past on the part of viewers through the objects witnessed, and remembering it in a certain way as to how those objects have been arranged and displayed. For instance, what is remembered about Chinese burial objects and in what way is influenced by the way they are displayed, and in what configuration. Therefore, curators can be selective of what aspects of the objects they wish viewers to remember and what becomes entrenched in the memory of museum visitors.

The participation and subjective experience of the audience in the museum means that museums are also sites where new memories can be built. According to Carol Duncan, the museum itself represents a time outside of time, or a liminal⁷⁵ or timeless space, which one takes time out of their day-to-day time and space to attend. In this space the museum object becomes divested of its particular temporal-spatial features and it becomes relatable, or at least evocative, in some way to different visitors who encounter it. Sheldon Annis describes the museum as a ‘dream space’ in which objects interact with the viewer’s

⁷¹ Crane, pg.3.

⁷² Preziosi in Duro (ed), pg.101-102.

⁷³ Connerton, pg.26.

⁷⁴ Wertsch, pg.7.

⁷⁵ Duncan, pg.11-12.

subrational consciousness, energising imagination and memory.⁷⁶ In this space, the objects on display can trigger and stimulate all sorts of existing personal memories, just as new ones can be created.⁷⁷ As Crane explains:

The museum is not the only site, but perhaps a particularly evocative one, where subjectivities and objectivities collide...a series of collisions between the personal and the public, the individual and the institutional, the subjective and the objective, create new, highly energized relationships between museums and memory. Individual memories and academic intentions interact in the production of personal expectations and collective representations, in an ongoing, reciprocal mediation.⁷⁸

Gaynor Kavanagh holds a similar view, that:

The extent of recall is enhanced by access to things which stimulate the senses. Remembering is stimulated by environments or circumstances...The multi-sensory experience of museums, together with the social nature of the visit, puts many visitors in a situation where recall is natural, even spontaneous...Some exhibitions may be designed to provoke a mood or play on those memories which are perceived to be jointly held.⁷⁹

Thus, the senses, the imagination, and subconscious of individual subjects is stimulated when they come into contact with objects in a museum, and from this new memories can be created. So, although objects carry with them certain meanings and memories and the arrangement and display of them can serve to emphasise or diminish these, it is also the case that new memories (both collective and individual) are created of the objects when they come into contact with new audiences and viewers. In this case, what a particular object represents, means, or was made for, becomes somewhat irrelevant. Therefore, although Chinese burial objects were made for a very specific purpose and carry memories specific to the people

⁷⁶ Sheldon Annis in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, Leicester University Press, 2000, pg.3.

⁷⁷ Kavanagh, pg.3, Jordanova in Vergo (ed), pg.25, Hooley McLaughlin, 'The Pursuit of Memory: Museums and the Denial of the Fulfilling Sensory Experience', *The Journal of Museum Education*, Vol.23, No.3, Too Hot to Handle? Museums and Controversy (1998), pg.10, Santos, pg.37, 38.

⁷⁸ Crane, pg.7.

⁷⁹ Kavanagh, pg.4.

and culture they derive from, new memories can also be generated in response to them in the new context of the museum.

Burial Objects, Museums, and Ethics

There is often discrepancy about material unearthed from tombs, who the material belongs to, and how it ends up in certain hands. A lot of excavated material has been acquired over the years as a result of looting, or it has been taken without permission.⁸⁰ Many ‘Western’ collectors and dealers have been suspected of acquiring objects in association with the despoiling of temples and graves.⁸¹ For instance, Charles Freer, when acquiring objects in China for the Freer Gallery, is suspected of purchasing pieces from questionable sources.⁸² However, ethical guidelines, especially in more recent years, have regulated this. For instance, in 1930 the Chinese government published a law claiming all antiquities in the ground for the State, which meant that archaeological activities and the acquisition of Chinese objects had to be redirected.⁸³ From the 1950s, excavation was carried out only by expert diggers, and the material recovered underwent scrutiny and analysis by Chinese archaeologists.⁸⁴ Through the 1990s the main restriction was on acquiring objects which had been illegally imported. However, by 2004 there was a regulation that objects could not have been acquired from their country of origin less than ten years before being acquired by a museum. The American Association of Museums decided in 2008 that there needed to be transparency in acquisition guidelines, research on the provenance of newly acquired objects, and assurance that objects had left their country of origin prior to the 1970 UNESCO Convention.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Willis in Sullivan, pg.148, Jason Steubner, ‘The Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House, London, 1935-36’, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.148, No.1241 (August, 2006), pg.529-530.

⁸¹ Cohen, pg.420-421, Benjamin March, *China and Japan in Our Museums*, Rumford Press, USA, 1929, pg.24.

⁸² Cohen, pg.415.

⁸³ Ibid, pg.421.

⁸⁴ Ralph Riccalton ‘The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artefacts at Canterbury Museum’, undated, Canterbury Museum Records (hereafter CMR), Fine Arts 6/7, Box 31, Folder 82.

⁸⁵ Alex W. Barker, ‘Exhibiting Archaeology: Archaeology and Museums’, Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Colombia, Missouri 65211-1421, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2010, 39, pg.301-302.

A major question surrounding this case of the display of Chinese burial objects is whether they should be displayed at all, and if they are, how. Objects relating to human remains are difficult to classify and it is often difficult to determine whether they are to be considered as remnants of individuals, as ‘art’, or as ‘objects’. As Balachandran notes:

...the term ‘human remains’ is vaguely defined and redefined from one author to the next; it may refer only to skeletal or body fragments; include the artifacts once placed in situ with the human body; or encompass the grave markers, the site, or even the landscape associated with the burial.⁸⁶

Moreover:

Numerous anthropologists and members of descendant and religious communities have argued that separating remains into ‘bodies’ and ‘objects’ ignores the deep interconnectedness of these different elements in a grave, and violates the sanctity, original intent, and conceptual integrity of the burial.⁸⁷

Collecting and displaying burial objects, especially in the early nineteenth century in the ‘West’, can also be indicative of Eurocentric power relations existing between cultures, that the ‘Western’ cultures had the right to appropriate ‘Eastern’ objects and display them to a ‘Western’ audience, often having little understanding of the objects or the ethical complexities of putting them on display.⁸⁸

Burial objects can be regarded as human remains, having been buried with human bodies and being considered to be connected to the spirit of the deceased. Under the NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) legislation in the United States, both indigenous human remains and their associated grave goods are to be repatriated upon request, which indicates the connection between

⁸⁶ Balachandran, pg.200.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pg.202, 212.

⁸⁸ Stocking, pg.5.

grave goods and human remains.⁸⁹ Therefore, perhaps Chinese burial objects could be considered a form of human remains and should be treated and displayed according to the same criteria.

The ethical issues around the treatment and display of human remains in museums only began to be seriously considered by ethnographers in the late twentieth century.⁹⁰ In regards to human remains, Alberti, et al acknowledge that 'It is clear that there are widely variant circumstances in which human remains can be displayed in museums: of acquisition, of geography, of age, of purpose, of cultural context. But the question remains: should they be displayed at all?'⁹¹ He argues that in the case of tombs,

If display of individuals who have clearly been unable to give permission is to be avoided, with the possible justification that their elaborate tombs, riddled with sealed doors and hidden passageways, were therefore meant to remain secret, is it then acceptable to display their grave goods at all?⁹²

Bruce Sullivan notes that many objects which end up in museums had religious meaning and purpose in the community or culture which they derive from, and that such objects ought to be treated accordingly.⁹³ However, this is often not the case, as Geoffrey Scarre states in regard to Egyptian remains:

...mummies have been dug up and exported from Egypt, and museums around the world display Egyptian mummies, openly denying - or ignoring - the clear wishes of the ancient Egyptians themselves.⁹⁴

Consequently, there is a resulting misinterpretation of cultural beliefs, and the same is the case with Chinese burial objects, and any other burial remains or objects which were either intended for burial, or

⁸⁹ Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, Piotr Bienkowski, Malcolm J. Chapman, and Rose Drew, 'Should we display the dead?', *Museum and Society*, 7 (3), March 2009, pg.137.

⁹⁰ Alberti, et al, pg.134.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, pg.137, Willis in Sullivan, pg.145.

⁹³ Sullivan, pg.1-2.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pg.140-141.

intended to remain buried. Not only did burial objects belong to individuals, they belonged to *dead* individuals, which complicates the situation even further, as since these individuals will remain dead, the object will always be relevant to them,⁹⁵ and in the case of Chinese burial objects, the objects will remain in use ad infinitum. In the museum, objects still have a form of ‘religious’ meaning, but not in the same way.

In the British Museum’s online guide for the care of human remains in museums, it is stated that human remains should only be displayed if they ‘make a material contribution to a particular interpretation; and that contribution could not be made equally effectively in another way.’⁹⁶ This suggests that the material remnants are important in gaining an understanding or ‘interpretation’ of that which they derive from or represent, and for this reason and this reason only, they should be displayed. According to the British Museum’s guidelines, human remains can be displayed:

...so long as the museum is satisfied that it can hold the remains in a lawful manner; provenance has been clearly established; there is no suspicion of illicit trade; and the remains are of potential value to the museum or wider scientific community.⁹⁷

Therefore, there are different requirements for the display of human remains and proper respect and treatment of human remains is of course relative and perceived differently by different peoples and cultures over time.⁹⁸ The Human Tissue Act of 2004 states that human remains ‘should be treated with appropriate respect and dignity,’⁹⁹ but what is considered respectful and dignified and who has the right to decide this seems irrelevant when the dead who the remains belong to cannot influence or dictate this. Sarah Tarlow observes that ‘...it is possible to argue that all our ethical responsibilities relate to the

⁹⁵ Storrie, pg.112.

⁹⁶ Alberti, et al, pg.144.

⁹⁷ British Museum Online Guide for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, pg.17, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/DCMS%20Guide.pdf> (Accessed 15/03/2016).

⁹⁸ British Museum Online Guide for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, pg.8, Alberti, et al, pg.143.

⁹⁹ Alberti, et al, pg.138.

present and future, and that the past is a ‘resource’ to be used to support the present, but that there is also a contrary argument that we owe a responsibility towards past people, at least in terms of how we represent them.’¹⁰⁰ That people of the past are no longer important seems to be a Eurocentric, ‘Western’ view, as, in many cultures people of the past are often integral to the lives of those in the present,¹⁰¹ and will remain so for future generations, which means that in many cases there is no clear separation between the past and the present as Tarlow suggests. This is especially the case in Chinese culture, where ancestor worship is a significant aspect of society, which is all the more reason to display Chinese burial objects according to the signification and purpose they had in their original context, if they are to be displayed at all.

Even when an attempt is made at this, the original meaning and value can often be misconstrued in a new context. For instance, in the case of Egyptian remains, it has been considered that giving the items an ‘afterlife’ in the museum is a means to respect the intended purpose of the objects to be immortal, but the objects were intended to be immortal in the context of the tomb and their native country.¹⁰² There is also the case where the museum is seen as a sort of sacred space in which to house such objects, which is supposedly an appropriate alternate location to the tomb.¹⁰³ Therefore, even if there is regard for the original identity and meaning of the objects, this can be misinterpreted and result in unintentional disrespectful treatment.

The question of the age of the human remains and associated goods is a complex one. There are many instances where less concern is shown for the original identity and meaning of them when they are very old, as opposed to greater concern and respect being given to those of lesser age. This is supposedly

¹⁰⁰ Tarlow in Alberti, et al, pg.140.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pg.142.

¹⁰² Ibid, pg.140.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pg.143, Balachandran, pg.201.

because those remains which are more recent are in a sense ‘closer to home’ and the reality of their physical identity as human remains and is more acute. The same sort of situation occurs when someone knows the person whom the remains belonged to.¹⁰⁴ Arguably at least, the more ‘past’ something is, the more remote and less personal it is, and therefore the more relatable it is to anyone. In displaying Chinese burial objects as being thousands of years old, this can imply that they are no longer relevant to their original context, less tied to it, and for this reason, can be made more relatable to a modern audience. Age may also have been a contributing factor in it being thought acceptable to empty Han Dynasty graves and reuse and recirculate their contents, as it appears to have been assumed that thousands of years later they would no longer be needed or in use by the deceased. Thus, the more removed the material is from its past context, the easier it can be to engage with, but, again, this distorts the accurate representation of it.

Museums have a responsibility to educate the public about past cultures and peoples, and the display of human remains and associated grave goods is a means to do so.¹⁰⁵ However, this is supposed to inform, involve and interest rather than sensationalise.¹⁰⁶ As far as the desire to display human remains and the desire of audiences to witness them goes, the majority of documentation points towards their entertainment potential.¹⁰⁷ A good example of this is using human remains and their associated objects to arouse fascination and wonder in their mere association with death and someone deceased.¹⁰⁸ It could be contended then, in this case, that the display of human remains accords more succinctly with early museum practice (e.g. the cabinet of curiosities) than of modern museum practice which attempts to present objects in a manner more sensitive to their original cultural connotations and identity. It could also be suggested that remains not only of the dead, but of the long dead of another country or culture, would hold even greater interest. How cultures of different ethnicities are valued within the given context

¹⁰⁴ Alberti, et al, pg.137.

¹⁰⁵ British Museum Online Guide for the Care of Human Remains in Museums, pg.7.

¹⁰⁶ Alberti, et al, pg.143.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pg.135.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pg.141, 142.

therefore comes into play. For instance, Alberti, et al note that ‘Those who are distant from us - in time, race or place - do not get the same respect, or are less valued, and are effectively treated as objects...it remains acceptable (and legal), because the bodies come from China, or Germany, or places we do not know about.’¹⁰⁹ What Alberti, et al suggest here is that not having adequate information on the objects can be used as an excuse to treat them with less value. Even if this is not intended, if little is known about the objects, they would be displayed with little accompanying information, causing them to be seen more as objects, which essentially has the same effect. Either way, the display of the remains of other cultures has the potential to divest them of their cultural meaning and significance and objectify them, and the proper treatment and display of the remains is especially problematic when little is known about them or the culture they derive from.

Alberti, et al argue that, at the very least, displaying human remains gives modern society a chance to encounter death, something which is denied and hidden in ‘Western’ society.¹¹⁰ It is also a means, through the objects displayed, to elicit a connection between the past and present, the living and dead, in order to understand different perceptions of life and death throughout different times and cultures to compare and gain an understanding of ‘humanity’ in general.¹¹¹ However, he also acknowledges that:

The problem is that displays do not introduce visitors to the real experience of death, the death of someone close: exhibitions of human remains effectively distance the viewer from any understanding of the nature of human remains and death. Human remains are displayed as clean bones or preserved specimens...¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pg.141.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, pg.136, 137.

¹¹¹ Ibid, pg.142-143, 144.

¹¹² Ibid, pg.138.

So, the display of human remains may have educational potential, but in taking on this value in being displayed, aspects of their past value is destroyed in the process. Alberti, et al also argues that when we encounter dead bodies we treat them in the same way as ‘things’:

We put them into a particular context, with restricted information that is carefully chosen to interpret the dead body for our own contingent purposes. In this way, we turn bodies into objects, ‘things’ to be used for our needs, for the purpose of the still living.¹¹³

According to Balachandran:

...this arbitrary separation of human remains into ‘people’ and ‘things’ is evidence of a late 19th and early 20th century museological practice which relegates the body to the realm of natural science and artifacts to that of social science, thus ignoring the fact that both the body and its objects were evidence of cultural production.¹¹⁴

This may make human remains easier for viewers to engage with and gain some understanding and appreciation of in a display sense, but it seems somewhat sacrilegious to reduce them to this, as ‘...There is no relationship between us and these displayed dead, and that lack of relationship makes it futile...it emphasises the dead as objects, as nothing to do with us.’¹¹⁵ The same could be said for burial objects, as being displayed in this way denies their identity and innate meaning and worth. Death is constructed and reconstructed in the museum and although burial objects may be indexical of death, the display of them alters these connotations.

Alberti, et al claim that:

Displaying the dead is simply a desire, a wish for entertainment, sensationalism, curiosity...It may be interesting, to some, but it is not necessary. If we are serious about showing dignity and respect to the

¹¹³ Ibid, pg.137.

¹¹⁴ Balachandran, pg.202.

¹¹⁵ Alberti, et al, pg.138.

dead, especially the ancient dead, to respect their own wishes, to treat them as persons with a say in what happens to them after their death, there is no reason at all to display the dead.¹¹⁶

That being said, while this may be the ideal scenario, the fact of the matter is that burial objects have been excavated and have ended up in museums, so they have to be dealt with in some way. Perhaps displaying them is unnecessary and has the potential for the objects to be disrespected and misrepresented, but if they are to be displayed then this should be done in a way that is considered to be the most respectful to the objects given what is known about them.

Burial Objects, Museums, and Sacrality

The term ‘sacred’ is a recurring theme referred to in conjunction with the discussion of museums, and in particular, the exhibition of human remains and grave goods within them. Since objects undergo ontological transformations in different contexts, this also involves objects which were sacred to become profane and vice versa.¹¹⁷ As Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan observes:

Somehow in the alchemy of things, as human hands and minds work on the world, the ordinary transmutes into the extraordinary, the imperfect is made perfect, and what was once expendable becomes a protected and cherished object.¹¹⁸

The question, though, is what defines these objects as sacred and why they are considered as such in the new context of the museum. Crane acknowledges the controversy over displaying sacred objects, stating that:

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pg.142.

¹¹⁷ Gibson, pg.56.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, pg.54.

Museums around the world are struggling over issues of repatriation and the sacrilege inherent in displays of sacred objects and human remains, responding to specific demands for objects to be removed from view and from museum holdings.¹¹⁹

In regard to objects which had religious connotations in their original context, Sullivan questions whether such objects are still regarded as sacred in another context, whether they become essentially 'art' objects, or whether they become simultaneously both, depending on who is viewing them.¹²⁰ Therefore, whether or not an object is, was, or will be 'sacred' is subjective and dependent on context. For instance, in many cases, objects become treated as 'art' objects in the museum context regardless of whether or not they were considered so in their original context.¹²¹

Michael Willis gives an example of an image of the Hindu deity Durga displayed at the British Museum, which was originally created to be used in the festival of Durga Puja. During the festival, the deity was thought to manifest in the image, so during that time the image became sacred, but once the festival was over the image was to be thrown into a river or body of water to disintegrate. It was therefore created with the intention of it being ephemeral, not to end up being collected and preserved in a museum. However, this is exactly what happened, as the image was thought an appropriate specimen to document Indian religious practice, even though this particular image was never actually consecrated. Thus, this is an example of an object being plucked from its original context and being represented in a different way in a museum collection. Also, a related issue is the extent to which this image can be considered sacred. As Sullivan points out, in the orthodox sense it cannot as it was never consecrated in the first place, and even if it had, it only would have been so for the duration of the festival, but in the context of the museum, it is made to be sacred as a 'religious image'. Though, Willis argues that '...this object is special, that is, indicative of a life process and religious tradition; but that it is not sacred in itself. It is only made so in

¹¹⁹ Crane, pg.9.

¹²⁰ Sullivan, pg.1-2.

¹²¹ Gell, pg.5.

the imagination of the viewer.¹²² Therefore, whether an object is considered sacred or not is highly dependent on context, representation, and the interpretation of the viewer.

This case is analogous with that of Chinese burial objects, which likewise had a particular religious function in their original context, were intended to remain in that context, but have been removed from it, re-represented and interpreted in a new context. In this new context of the museum the object's original religious connotations are interpreted in relation to the value it has in the museum and to the audience viewing it. The Durga image is represented in the museum as a 'religious' image and is to be considered sacred when in actual fact it is not, whereas the Chinese burial objects at Canterbury Museum, which are innately religious or 'sacred' are not represented as such. Rather than gaining or losing 'sacredness' in different contexts, perhaps objects go from being sacred in one way in one context, to becoming sacred in another way in a new context.

According to Matthew T. Evans, the difference between a sacred and profane object is that a sacred object has been in some way set apart from the profane and its valuation goes beyond utility.¹²³ One could argue that since Chinese burial objects were made to be 'used' that they are not sacred, however, since they were made to be used by the dead in the afterlife, this involves spiritual value being applied to them, and in this way they could be considered sacred. Regardless of this, the fact that in a museum they are serving a function and purpose *beyond* their original function and purpose in the tomb, they could be considered sacred in Evan's terms.

¹²² Willis in Sullivan, pg.146.

¹²³ Gibson, pg.59.

David Chidester argues that something is sacred if ‘...it is a focus for extraordinary attention, the locus of ritual sacrifice, the nexus of ritualized exchanges, and the matrix of religious contestation.’¹²⁴ Any object in a museum is a focus for extraordinary attention, which suggests that any object could potentially be considered sacred in the museum context in Chidester’s terms. However, grave goods have religious connotations to begin with, so perhaps their sacrality is heightened in the context of the museum.

As discussed in previous sections, the museum can be considered a sacred space in itself, and both George W. Stocking and Sullivan claim that the display of ‘sacred’ objects adds to the sacrality of the museum and vice versa.¹²⁵ Lawrence Eugene Sullivan and Alison Edwards claim that:

...work of museums and the practice of religions resemble one another in feature and function: gathering and arranging sacred objects, displaying them to amplify their power, divining new meanings through them and playing on the contrast between appearance and concealment.¹²⁶

Willis notes the tendency for museums in the early nineteenth century to classify ‘exotic’ objects as ‘specimens’ representative of a foreign culture, showing little concern for whether or not they may have been considered sacred in their original context.¹²⁷ However, Sullivan notes that the representation of religions in museums is becoming more pronounced,¹²⁸ and in his opinion:

Considering how and why religion is addressed (or alternatively, evaded) in museum exhibitions of Asian religious objects will deepen our understanding of ‘the sacred’ as manifest in objects and as a category in religious studies.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Sullivan, pg.1.

¹²⁵ Sullivan, pg.2, Balachandran, pg.201, Stocking, pg.6.

¹²⁶ Sullivan and Edwards in Balachandran, pg.201.

¹²⁷ Willis in Sullivan, Pg.149.

¹²⁸ Sullivan, pg.4.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

If this is the case, this allows for the sacrality of objects to be acknowledged in a way that it may not have been before.

Since objects in the museum have been dislodged from their original sacred context, it is possible that this desacralises the object itself.¹³⁰ Balachandran notes how burial remains are sometimes displayed within a ‘recreated archaeological context’, a setting which she claims ‘offers a way for ‘archaeological evidence to rehumanise the remains...[so that we don’t deny] the people of the past their humanity.’¹³¹ This is precisely how the Chinese burial objects are currently displayed at Canterbury Museum. While Balachandran might claim that this ‘rehumanises’ the objects, recreating the archaeological dig as opposed to the interior of the tomb arguably ‘rehumanises’ the archeologist more than it does the actual remains, as it valorises the moment of excavation. Balachandran also notes that Archaeology is a destructive process, disassembling the original burial, but asserts that in this way, curation is constructive, and attempts to reassemble it,¹³² essentially re-sacralising it in the process. So, although it is a reconstruction of the archaeological dig, the act of reconstructing where the objects were found might be seen as a step toward re-sacralising them.

Since burial objects were buried with a human body or bodies and essentially belong to that or those persons, Balachandran suggests that the sacrility of burial objects is largely derived from their association with the person or body they are buried with. Gibson also holds this view: ‘What differentiates the sacred object from these other statuses [profane, abject etc.] is...its status as remainder or trace-object of the deceased person.’¹³³ However, Gibson argues that, like a lock of hair cut from the head of a deceased person, although it is not that person, it is *symbolic* of them, having a detachable status as ‘a part object

¹³⁰ Balachandran, pg.208, 212.

¹³¹ Ibid, pg.208.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Gibson, pg.58.

that symbolizes connection to a whole embodied person.’¹³⁴ In this case, being symbolic of the deceased, the part object or derivative of the dead person is sacred. Chinese burial objects could be considered in the same way, that even though they have been detached from the deceased, they are symbolic of them. This idea is convincing insofar as the connection to the deceased is acknowledged. Thus, although Chinese burial objects have been excavated and extricated from their original sacred context, there are ways in which they can become to some extent re-sacralised in the museum.

To conclude, although Chinese burial objects retain meaning and value from their original context, this is altered in various ways in the museum, as a result of museologisation and the objects being made appealing to a living audience. Therefore, objects gain something and lose something when they undergo museologisation, and the various ways they are handled will benefit some, while disadvantaging others. Burial objects sit at the intersection of a discussion of death, memory, ethics, and sacrality, and these are all ways in which they can be engaged with and made meaningful in the museum context, which subjective experiences have significant impact on. Although Chinese burial objects were never intended to be seen by a living audience, being made specifically or placed in the tomb for the deceased- and- arguably they should not have been excavated in the first place, but since they have and have ended up at a museum, the best practices should be followed in the way in which they are handled. Indeed, although they were sacred in their original context before being excavated, they can be re-sacralised in various ways when becoming part of a museum collection.

¹³⁴ Ibid, pg.60.

Chapter Three: Modes of Display of Chinese Burial Objects from the Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum

Chinese burial objects from the Rewi Alley Collection featured in two significant installations of East Asian art at Canterbury Museum in 1958 and 1994. In the 1950s and 1960s in New Zealand, there was growing awareness and appreciation of Asian art and the arts of the Pacific, but prior to the construction of the Hall of Oriental Art in 1958, records are unclear regarding exhibitions of this material at Canterbury Museum. Canterbury Museum Records were particularly useful for obtaining details concerning the design and construction of both installations. The 'Hall of Oriental Art' was the first major permanent installation of East Asian art at Canterbury Museum, constructed under the direction of Dr. Roger Duff, who was appointed Director of Canterbury Museum in 1949, and consisted primarily of glass cases of objects, reflective of museological practices internationally at the time. The Annual and Director's Reports of the Museum Records were helpful for retrieving information on the design and construction of the Hall of Oriental Art, along with some newspaper articles for public responses to the display. A report written by G.C.C. Sandston for Duff in 1952 on the successful 1952 Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art at the Durham Street Gallery proved particularly useful regarding the conception and design of the Hall of Oriental Art, as it appears ideas suggested by Sandston were adopted into the 1958 design. This installation was renovated in 1976 as part of the development of a new wing of the Museum. Even though Annual Reports from Museum records of the 1970s gave some indication of what this involved, it is still unclear exactly what was altered. The second installation, which is currently installed at Canterbury Museum, was designed under the direction of Roger Fyfe, Ethnologist at the Museum at the time of its conception in 1993. Opened in 1994 as the 'Hall of Asian Decorative Arts', this installation consists largely of modern glass cases of objects, with a set of cave structures at one end of the hall in which the Chinese burial objects are displayed, to simulate an archaeological dig. A variety of details can be derived from documents recording the design of this installation, and the involvement of the community (particularly the Chinese community) in the funding and promotion for it, all which were

derived from Canterbury Museum Records. The documents ‘Asian Gallery Development Principles’, ‘Display Concept Parameters’ and ‘Asian Gallery Display Concepts’ written by Roger Fyfe were helpful in determining the ideas which went into forming the design of the installation, as were minutes from meetings of the Chinese Display Gallery Fund Raising Group for identifying details of the involvement of the Chinese community and the public.

I will discuss how each installation deals with Chinese burial objects, and in doing so, reflects changes in museological practice, as influenced by overseas trends, as well as changing perceptions and interpretations of Chinese culture and Chinese art between 1958 and 1994. Making reference to issues discussed in Part Two in regard to the display of Chinese burial objects, I will also address the issue of Chinese burial objects being specifically for the dead and not intended for a living audience, and how these various modes of display manage this.

Exhibitions of Chinese Burial Objects prior to the Installations at Canterbury Museum

In the lead-up to the first significant installation which included Chinese burial objects at Canterbury Museum, there were several exhibitions of Chinese art, which included Chinese burial objects from the Rewi Alley Collection during the 1930s and 1950s. These displays give an indication of how Chinese art was understood, interpreted, and displayed prior to the construction of the installations at the Museum.

A major exhibition, titled the ‘Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art’, toured the four main centres of New Zealand throughout the first four months of 1937. It displayed over 360 objects,¹ and was a culminating exhibition of a series of smaller exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese art which had been organised and curated by Captain George A. Humphreys-Davies (1880–1948) throughout the 1930s.

¹ Captain George Humphreys-Davies (ed.), *An Exhibition of Chinese Art, Including Many Examples from Famous Collections, Exhibited in New Zealand*, Auckland: N.Z. Newspapers Ltd, 1937, pg.i.

While the exhibition catered to existing Eurocentric tastes, at the same time it attempted to give an authentic representation of Chinese art.² All galleries were arranged chronologically, by country, and only sometimes by material.³ Text panels were added to provide explanations of why certain groups of objects were placed together, and labels to provide information on individual objects for viewers who were not familiar with them.⁴

As a colony of Britain, New Zealand was heavily influenced by British attitudes toward Chinese art and these had a significant impact on how Chinese art was collected and interpreted. In 1935-6 there had been a significant exhibition of Chinese art in London, titled the 'International Exhibition of Chinese Art', which was very similar to the exhibition which travelled New Zealand.⁵ In Auckland, the items were arranged according to visual appearance and material, and for the catalogue, like objects were photographed together in order to group them, which was also the method used for the British exhibition. Although they were primarily considered in terms of their visual appeal, Humphreys-Davies sought also to encourage an appreciation of the items for their 'scientific' and archeological value. Moreover, in the catalogue there are statements, albeit brief, about the cultural production of the items, which demonstrates some ethnological consideration of the objects. In the Wellington display, at the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum (now *Te Papa Tongarewa*/The National Museum of New Zealand), the objects were

² Stacey Pierson 'From Market and Exhibition to University: Sir Percival David and the Institutionalization of Chinese Art History in England' in Vimalin Rujivacharakul (ed.), *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting*, University of Delaware Press, The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., UK, 2011, pg.133.

³ Denise Patry Leidy 'Discovery and Display: Case Studies from the Metropolitan Museum of Art' in Bruce M. Sullivan (ed.), *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015, pg.103.

⁴ Leidy in Sullivan pg.105.

⁵ For instance, in the British Exhibition there was an emphasis on ceramics and arrangement according to dynastic progression, features which were also evident in the New Zealand Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art. The connection between the two countries and the two Exhibitions is also evinced by the fact that Humphreys-Davies liaised with the likes of George Eumorfopoulos and British and European Museum curators in the construction of the New Zealand Exhibition, and items were loaned from international collections. The catalogue to the Exhibition also relied heavily on British scholarship and knowledge of the items and contained written pieces by British scholars and curators. See James Beattie & Lauren Murray, *Mapping The Social Lives of Objects: Popular and Artistic Responses to the 1937 Exhibition of Chinese Art in New Zealand*, <http://www.eastasianhistory.org/37/beattie-murray> (Accessed May 2, 2016).

arranged by material and displayed in glass cases. There were no labels in this display, and only red tags which indicated their inclusion in the 1935-6 exhibition in London. Each object was numbered, which corresponded to a number in the catalogue, where viewers could read basic information such as type, medium, and approximate date, reflecting the same taxonomic approach as the Auckland exhibition.

Thus, pre-1950, the value given to Chinese objects in the New Zealand context appeared to have been primarily based on Eurocentric notions of taste, as influenced by Britain. This attitude is also evident in regard to Chinese burial objects in a *Press* article of 1948 titled 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China':

When, in a few weeks' time, the latest samples of early Chinese art received from Mr. Rewi Alley are displayed in the Canterbury Museum, many people will wonder what there is in them to arouse enthusiasm; but there is, at the least, something of pathos in the thought that these rather grubby-looking pieces of baked earthenware have survived by more than a thousand years the forgotten craftsmen who shaped them.⁶

Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, et al would argue that since these objects are ancient and derive from a different culture, they would be less valued since they are less personal to the audience.⁷ However, this writer indicates an opinion that the public will find little value in the objects, *apart* from the fact that they are thousands of years old, as they do not fit with 'Western' notions of taste and beauty, which value the physical appearance and formal qualities of an object. Therefore, attitudes toward Chinese burial objects and how they were interpreted and appreciated in New Zealand perhaps differed to how they were engaged with in other 'Western' countries. That being said, if people had been made aware of some of the cultural conditions in which the objects were made, they may have been more likely to judge them according to their intended meaning and purpose as opposed to making assessments based on their

⁶ *The Press* 'Ancient Works of Art Sent from China', undated, Canterbury Museum Records (hereafter CMR), Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

⁷ 'Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, Piotr Bienkowski, Malcolm J. Chapman, and Rose Drew, 'Should we display the dead?', *Museum and Society*, 7 (3), March 2009, pg.141.

physical appearance alone. Therefore, lack of information likely contributed to this emphasis on visual appearance as the primary mode of appraisal.

In 1950 at the Provincial Council Chambers on Durham Street in Christchurch, there was an exhibition of Chinese art and craft, titled the 'Rewi Alley Chinese Art and Craft Exhibition'. This was organised by a group of Alley's friends in celebration of the Canterbury Centennial that year, and included items produced by the boys of his technical training school in Shandan, along with items loaned by Mrs. F.J. Pretsch from the Rewi Alley Collection at Canterbury Museum.⁸ From the list of items loaned from Canterbury Museum for the exhibition, it can be discerned that among these were some Chinese burial objects, including a horse head in baked clay (E 137.73), one of the model granaries (C 1948.40), and the model stove (C 1947.3).

In the opinion of Manying Ip, in New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s, the social and cultural climate was becoming more curious, open and accepting of outside influences and cultures such as China,⁹ which accounted for a growing appreciation of Chinese art and burial objects in the 1950s. In addition, according to Athol McCredie, after the Second World War New Zealand had become less tied to Britain and had begun acknowledging its connections with the Pacific.¹⁰ It is observed by various scholars that China was acknowledged as being part of the Pacific Basin, so this increased interest in, and ties with, Asia.¹¹ That being the case, arts of the Pacific were still relatively scarcely shown at this time.

⁸ Letter from Mrs. F.J. Pretsch 21/03/1950, CMR, Fine Arts 3/1, Box 59, Folder 108.

⁹ Manying Ip in James Kember & Paul Clark, *China and New Zealand: A Thriving Relationship Thirty Years On*, New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland, 2003, pg.37-38.

¹⁰ Athol McCredie, 'Going Public: New Zealand Art Museums in the 1970s', Master's Thesis, Massey University, Wellington, 1999, pg.44, 81, Letter from Roger Duff to *The Press* 15/3/1960, CMR, Director's Correspondence 1948-1950, Fine Arts 3/1, Box 59, Folder 106-108.

¹¹ Bryce Harland in Kember & Clark, pg.31, Mr Justice Northcroft in *Chinese and Japanese Art: An Exhibition Held Under the Auspices of the Canterbury Museum, 21 April to 17 May 1952 at the Durham Street Art Gallery*,

In 1952, the 'Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art' was held at the Durham Street Gallery in Christchurch. The exhibition comprised Chinese ceramics and carving, Japanese ceramics, carvings, and 'objets d'art'¹² generally, as well as wall scrolls and prints.¹³ It also borrowed heavily from Canterbury Museum's collection of Han and Tang Dynasty pottery.¹⁴ It was an established practice in Britain and Europe to classify Chinese objects by the dynasty in which they were produced,¹⁵ hence the Chinese ceramics were arranged chronologically.¹⁶ However, it was also noted in the catalogue that Chinese ceramics are difficult to classify and that the many types are often over-simplified by attempts to categorise them with certainty.¹⁷ Thus, there was an awareness of the shortcomings of established modes of display of Chinese objects, but it was obviously still felt necessary to abide by them.

Consequently, Eurocentric standards of taste still had an effect on the visual appreciation of Chinese art, and an indication of this is given in a statement by Sandston in regard to objects displayed in the exhibition:

One must judge for oneself- but, as in most art, simplicity of line and balance are perhaps the first essentials to look for- followed closely by appropriateness of decoration which should be

Christchurch, New Zealand, pg.3, Christopher Elder in *A Collection in Memory of Rewi Alley*, Edited by Editorial Board of A Collection in Memory of Rewi Alley, New World Press, Beijing, China, 1997, pg.57.

¹² 'Objet d'art' means 'art object' in French, but was a term used in English to describe a small object that was of aesthetic value or curiosity. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/objet-d-art> (Accessed May 3, 2016). It was also used to describe an object that was not a painting, sculpture, drawing, or which otherwise did not conform with what was considered as 'art' in the traditional 'Western' sense.

¹³ G.C.C. Sandston in Canterbury Museum, *Chinese and Japanese Art: An Exhibition Held Under the Auspices of the Canterbury Museum, 21 April to 17 May 1952 at the Durham Street Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand*, Pegasus Press, 1952, pg.4.

¹⁴ Ibid, pg.7

¹⁵ Ibid, pg.8.

¹⁶ Ibid, pg.4.

¹⁷ Ibid, pg.8.

fundamentally simple without being bleak, and which can only afford to be rich as long as it is not gaudy.¹⁸

However, it is interesting that he also makes a point of elaborating on the practice of copying in Chinese art, stating that ‘The Chinese copy again and again the works of their best periods and often affix to them the original reign marks. This is not necessarily to mislead but because they genuinely admire the works copied.’¹⁹ The fact that he fears that copy material may ‘mislead’ indicates the Eurocentric preference for ‘originals’, and how copies (in the ‘Western’ case) are generally considered less valuable. He goes on to give an example of this in regard to Chinese burial objects, but outlines that the reason for making copies of objects had the spiritual or philosophical purpose of providing the deceased with these items in the afterlife.²⁰ That this is pointed out and an explanation given so that audiences do not disregard or value the copied material less is evidence that viewers were made aware of features of Chinese art and artistic practice, and were not left simply to view the objects in visual terms alone, as they may have been earlier in 1948.

The exhibition also indicates that there was a growing understanding and appreciation of Chinese art as more than just a ‘curiosity’. For example, in the Museum’s Annual Report for 1952-3 there is mention of the need for ‘aesthetic education’ and ‘NZs lack of aesthetic maturity’, and suggestions that the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art was a means to resurrect this.²¹ In the foreword in the catalogue for the exhibition, Mr Justice Northcroft stated that:

If we are to live in friendship with those countries which modern conditions of travel and communication have made our neighbours then we should assume the duties of neighbours and seek to learn what we may of their peoples. We should study their ways of thought, their fears and their

¹⁸ Ibid, pg.9.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1952-53, CMR, Fine Arts 7/4, Box 4.

hopes, their need of help from us and our need of help from them...we may see much in them we think should be improved. At the same time there should be found much of benefit to ourselves. Already we know something, although little, of the accumulated wisdom of these philosophic peoples. Much of this is still to be learned. As they have their stored treasures of the mind so they have also beauties of the creative arts. Some of this, too, is known to us but again there is much more to know.²²

This statement reflects that there was recognition of the benefits of understanding and displaying Chinese art as a means to understand Chinese culture, and to acknowledge China's connection to New Zealand as part of the Pacific.

The Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art appears to have been a pivotal event that influenced the development of the Hall of Oriental Art, which opened at Canterbury Museum in 1958. Before the exhibition, Sandston wrote to Duff:

I think it is one of the functions of the Museum to present art in an interesting and easily [assim] form + this would show the public the museum is a live institution!...P.S. If the Exhibition was a success you could then say to the public 'There now – that's the kind of thing we can do for you constantly at the Museum if you give us the money!!'.²³

Therefore, Sandston considered that museum exhibits could be made more interesting and appealing for viewers if funds were available to develop exhibitions along the same lines as the 'Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art'. In addition, in the catalogue for the exhibition, Sandston claimed that:

The Committee has gathered together in this Exhibition a number of things which we should like to show in the Canterbury Museum, but until the new building is subscribed for and completed we

²² Mr Justice Northcroft in *Chinese and Japanese Art: An Exhibition Held Under the Auspices of the Canterbury Museum, 21 April to 17 May 1952 at the Durham Street Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand*, pg.3.

²³ Letter from G.C.C. Sandston to Roger Duff 2/6/1951, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 1.

cannot do that. The Exhibition is, however, an indication of what the Museum could do for the public from time to time if the erection of the new building is brought to a successful conclusion.²⁴

This view is shared by Duff, who, in a letter to Hassall, acknowledged that ‘The purpose of the Exhibition is to promote the Museum’s campaign for an enlarged building by demonstrating what a fine Oriental Art display we could have, given a permanent gallery.’²⁵ In doing so, Sandston thought that ‘...standards of taste may be raised and the public given criteria to judge by in the future...’.²⁶ These opinions suggest that the organisers of the exhibition felt that audiences would respond well to the artefacts, so much so that they thought it reasonable to appeal for funding for the construction of a permanent display to house them. Therefore, the need for a proper installation of East Asian art was recognised, and the exhibition was considered an opportunity to show what the Museum had to offer, by displaying pieces from its collections, and the sort of display that could be constructed there given the monetary means.

In his report to Duff on the exhibition, Sandston noted a number of features to which the exhibition owed its success, which he suggested could be emulated in the design and construction of a new display at the Museum. One such feature was the lighting, as Sandston considered the exhibition to be ‘warm, pleasant and well lit’. He goes on to note the lighting of individual cases at the Museum as a step forward, and suggests that ‘If we could light the main hall brightly with fluorescent lighting this would, I feel, immeasurably improve the present approach to the galleries.’²⁷ In addition, Sandston expressed the need for chronological arrangement in making the material more comprehensible to the audience, stating that ‘The layout of the Exhibition was essentially synoptic and chronological where possible. This was in my

²⁴ Sandston in *Chinese and Japanese Art: An Exhibition Held Under the Auspices of the Canterbury Museum, 21 April to 17 May 1952 at the Durham Street Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand*, pg.4.

²⁵ Letter from Roger Duff to Hassall 21/3/1952, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 3.

²⁶ Letter from G.C.C. Sandston to Roger Duff 19/11/1951, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 6.

²⁷ Letter from G.C.C. Sandston to Roger Duff (Report on the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art) 9/6/1952, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 1.

opinion, the most important single factor contributing to the success of the show.’²⁸ Another successful addition to the exhibition was a library of books for reference. There was a library at the Museum, but this was criticised by Sandston for not being accessible or comfortable: ‘I envisage that one day the Museum Library could be the most constantly patronized of all its institutions. At the moment it hardly appears to be used at all...’.²⁹ Formal lectures and informal guide talks were also highly successful aspects of the exhibition, which Sandston considered made the Museum ‘live’, and he suggested something of this nature for the new display at the Museum.³⁰ What stands out as being of paramount concern from all of the above suggestions made by Sandston is the desired experience for the audience, which concurs with the opinion of Charles Saumarez Smith that having this as the primary consideration makes for the best museum display.³¹ Consequently, the ‘Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Art’ was a useful event for the publicity of East Asian art in Canterbury and provided some useful suggestions for the improvement of Asian art displays at the Museum, and for the design of the Hall of Oriental Art.

Hall of Oriental Art 1958

The Hall of Oriental Art was constructed under the direction of Duff, as part of a new wing of the Museum opened in 1958.³² In the Annual Report of 1958-9, it is acknowledged that it was as a result of the generous contribution of objects sent by Rewi Alley from China to Canterbury Museum, along with Duff’s interest in, and contacts with China, that this extension and larger permanent installation of Asian art was established.³³ The construction of the Hall of Oriental Art was quite a momentous event given that, as far as can be told, displays of East Asian art at the Museum prior to this installation had been temporary and haphazard.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Charles Saumarez Smith, ‘Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings’ in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 1989, pg.20.

³² Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1958-59, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 3.

³³ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1958-59 a-q, CMR, Fine Arts 7/4, Box 4.

In 1956 Duff had travelled with a party of New Zealanders to China as a guest of the Chinese Cultural Association for Relations with Foreign Nations. During this trip, Duff visited many Chinese Museums and collected a great number of Chinese antiquities to bring back for the Museum, primarily to fill gaps in the Museum's ceramic collection.³⁴ This had been foreseen in 1947, when Duff wrote to Alley that:

...Already we have a really wide range of pieces from you, and with future filling of gaps we should be able to exhibit the complete development of some items of Chinese culture (pottery for instance) from Neolithic to Ch'ing times. We look forward to the day when we will be able to provide modern show cases worthy of your material...³⁵

Duff must have thought that the current displays and cases for objects at the Museum were out of date, and that more 'modern' ones needed to be provided if a new display was to be constructed, for the display to equal others internationally. The trip also gave Duff the 'opportunity of obtaining first-hand knowledge of the geographical and historical setting' where the objects originated, which served as inspiration for the design of the Hall of Oriental Art.³⁶ Just before his trip to China, Duff wrote to Alley:

In the long run there can be no more effective means of bring [sic] home to New Zealand the genius of the remarkable Chinese people than by letting their achievements in art and archaeology tell their story from Museum displays...³⁷

Duff clearly believed that Chinese art had the potential to be well received and appreciated in New Zealand, and that a comprehensive museum display would be an effective way to educate the community about China and Chinese culture. This view is also expressed by Mr. Simonsen, who, in a letter to Duff in 1957, acknowledged the Museum's role in international understanding, and described the purpose of

³⁴ Letter from Roger Duff to Rewi Alley 26/3/1956, CMR, Roger Duff Special Subject Files- Research, Fine Arts 4/2 Box 65 A, Folder 391 D, *The Press* 'Party Leaves for China', 21/4/1956, CMR, Roger Duff Special Subject Files- Research, Fine Arts 4/2, Box 65 A, Folder 391 D.

³⁵ Letter from Roger Duff to Rewi Alley 30/5/1947, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

³⁶ Report from Chairman, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 3.

³⁷ Letter from Duff to Alley 26/3/56.

exhibiting Chinese art as being to ‘foster understanding’ as well as ‘satisfy curiosity’.³⁸ However, at the time this attitude was only evident among a minority of experts, such as Sandston, Northcroft, and Duff, who were keenly interested in Chinese art and culture, and it was likely not prevalent in the public imagination.

As is a typical practice in museums worldwide- since usually the museum’s collection cannot all be displayed at once- it is likely that only what were considered the ‘best’ items were included in the Hall of Oriental Art. In the Annual Report for 1958-9, Mr R.J. Jacobs is given credit for the layout of the cases in the Hall of Oriental Art, Mr. W. Pepler for the construction of the cabinets, and Mrs. Olwyn N. Turbott for the display of the selected objects, in which, it is stated ‘...her sure taste and artistry in the choice and arrangement of exhibits, have resulted in a Hall of unusual merit and distinction’.³⁹ Chinese art was the main feature of the installation, as described by Duff in a letter of 1957 to Mr. Mason, which noted that ‘...there is much to be said for one New Zealand museum in the beginning to specialise in Chinese art.’⁴⁰ This was pioneering, as it was obviously uncommon at this stage for New Zealand museums to have displays which focused on the individual countries of East Asia. In a *Press* article from 1956 titled ‘Artifacts from Old China’, it is observed that the new hall would mostly contain items from the Rewi Alley Collection,⁴¹ and the Chinese section of the installation consists almost entirely of objects from this source.⁴² It was decided that pottery would be the most prominent feature in the Chinese section as this was thought to be the ‘...best medium for illustrating the continuous development of Chinese culture.’⁴³

³⁸ Letter from Simonsen to Roger Duff 9/3/1957, CMR, Roger Duff Special Subject Files- Research, Fine Arts 4/2 Box 65 A, Folder 391 D.

³⁹ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1958-59, Report from Chairman, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 3.

⁴⁰ Letter from Roger Duff to Mr. Mason 29/20/1957, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁴¹ *The Press* ‘Artifacts from Old China’ 8/6/1956, CMR, Roger Duff Special Subject Files- Research, Fine Arts 4/2, Box 65A, Folder 391 D.

⁴² Letter from Roger Duff to Rewi Alley 4/2/1957, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 5.

⁴³ Letter from Roger Duff to Zhongchao Wu 10/6/1958, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 4.

The only existing photographic documentation of this exhibition is fig.43 and fig.44 which show some detail of the installation and give an indication of the general mode of display. It can be deciphered from these two photographs that it consisted mostly of lit glass cases inset into the walls. However, there is a Buddha statue situated on a plinth in the far right of fig.43, so although glass cases dominate, this was obviously not the only method of display used. Fig.43 shows the Buddha in the far right, a case of jade sculptures in the centre cabinet, and an assortment of ceramic/earthenware material in the cabinet on the far left, which includes Chinese burial objects, such as C1947.8 and C1947.2. The other photograph, fig.44, shows a view of the hall from the other direction, looking through the jade cabinet to reveal the whole of the ceramic/earthenware cabinet and also another cabinet of objects on the far left. From this image it can be discerned that the ceramic/earthenware cabinet not only contains C1947.8 and C1947.2, but also C1956.656. The Chinese burial objects appear to be arranged chronologically and by subject, with early Han Dynasty utilitarian items on the right and later Tang Dynasty figures on the left. Some of the objects are raised, possibly in an attempt to draw particular attention to more ‘significant’ items, or as a means of creating some visual interest in what would otherwise be a fairly homogenous, flat exhibit. Space issues may also have influenced this. All objects, Chinese burial objects included, were displayed in glass cases in the same manner, on plinths of various heights. It is noteworthy that the Chinese burial objects are displayed without visual clues that allude to their original identity and purpose. The arrangement of the Chinese burial objects in this way is reflective of Richard Grassby’s observation of particular characteristics or peculiarities of individual objects being disregarded in favour of a cohesive display, as based on type.⁴⁴ In the opinion of Elizabeth Hallam & Jenny Hockey, the presentation of the objects in this way would ‘deaden’ or ‘execute’ their past life,⁴⁵ which, ideally, according to Myrian Sepulveda dos Santos, Bruce M. Sullivan, and Sarah Tarlow, is what museum displays should strive to

⁴⁴ Richard Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol.35, no.4 (Spring 2005), pg.597-598.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Hallam & Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory & Material Culture*, Berg, Oxford; New York, 2001, pg.125.

preserve as a means to understand and ‘remember’ aspects of the culture they derive from.⁴⁶ However, the ‘re-membering’,⁴⁷ as Donald Preziosi would put it, of the objects in this way, must have been assumed to present them in the most informative and meaningful way to the audience,⁴⁸ which was that the display had aesthetic appeal above all.

A part of the concept for the design of the installation was to display the objects within a replica of a Northern Chinese house interior, with the façade of a Northern Chinese house being designed by Courtney Archer (1918-2002).⁴⁹ Duff expressed this intention in a letter to J.M. Tan of 1956, which stated that ‘...The most striking feature will be an ambitious attempt to represent the 20 foot façade (and roof) of a Chinese pavilion-style house and Courtney is drawing up detailed working drawings[...].’⁵⁰ In a letter from Duff to Alley on 13 March 1957, Duff noted that ‘...our carpenter is at work on the cases for the Hall of Oriental Arts- a project which should take up the rest of this year, with the Chinese house probably extra time again.’ Although plans were made for the construction of this, it was never brought to completion.

The construction of the Chinese house interior involved the gift of pieces of traditional rosewood Chinese furniture from the Imperial Palace Museum (fig.45).⁵¹ In a letter to Zhongchao Wu (1902-1984) on 19 October 1956, Duff informed Wu that

⁴⁶ Myrian Sepulveda dos Santos, ‘Museums and Memory: The Enchanted Modernity’, *Journal for Cultural Research*, 2003, 7:1, pg.38-39, Bruce M. Sullivan (ed.), *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015, pg.1-2, Sarah Tarlow in Alberti, et al, pg.140.

⁴⁷ Donald Preziosi in Paul Duro (ed.), *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg.101-102.

⁴⁸ Mark Sandberg in Edward P. Alexander & Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (2nd edition), AltaMira Press, UK, 2008, pg.187.

⁴⁹ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1956-57 a-i, CMR, Fine Arts 7/4, Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1956-57, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 2, Letter from Roger Duff to Rewi Alley, 13/3/1957, CMR, Director’s Correspondence, Fine Arts 3/1, Folder 119, Letter from Roger Duff to Zhongchao Wu, 3/7/1957, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁵⁰ Letter from Roger Duff to J.M. Tan 19/10/1956, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 4.

⁵¹ Letter from Roger Duff to E.G. Foord 6/1/1958, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Folder 2.

...the Museum plans to set out a special display of Chinese art and culture in a gallery 70 by 30 feet...At one end of the hall we propose to build the front façade of a Chinese house or pavilion 20 feet wide and deep enough to allow furnishings to be displayed in their human setting.

In the same letter, Duff asked for advice in obtaining: 'a suitable palace-type shade for a hanging electric light', 'a typical carpet', 'a simple centre table', and 'two sets of the following:- Two chairs flanking a small upright table'.⁵² In a letter from Wu to Duff on 1 May 1957, Wu expressed excitement at the plans for the Hall of Oriental Art and indicated that he had prepared the carpet and other Chinese furniture which would be sent as gifts for the display.⁵³ In reply to this letter, Duff wrote back to Wu that a set of two complete Moa skeletons would be sent to the donating museum in return for the furniture.⁵⁴ Duff thought that the addition of the Chinese furniture would complete the 'atmosphere of a Chinese house' for visitors.⁵⁵ In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Foord, Duff noted that '...We have a platform at one end intended to carry free standing Chinese furniture and with a clear wall 20 feet wide in which we had hoped to display a paneled screen...'.⁵⁶ Thus, even though the Chinese façade was never constructed, it is possible that the Chinese furniture was included in the installation, set up at one end of the Hall with the Foords' loaned screen forming a background. The attempt to recreate a Chinese setting in which to exhibit the objects may have been a means, as per Sanchita Balachandran's idea, to 're-humanise' the objects since this is closer to the original context that some of them have been displaced from.⁵⁷ Or, in Santos' opinion, this may be a means to encourage the visitor to remember the provenance of the objects and their significance in relation to their original context.⁵⁸ I would agree with both claims, each which compensate for the possible deadening or execution of this past life of the objects through their being displayed in a

⁵² Letter from Roger Duff to Zhongchao Wu 19/10/1956, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Folder 4.

⁵³ Letter from Zhongchao Wu to Roger Duff 1/5/1957, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Folder 4.

⁵⁴ Letter from Duff to Wu 3/7/1957, Letter from Duff to Alley 13/3/1957.

⁵⁵ Letter from Duff to Alley 4/2/1957.

⁵⁶ Letter from Roger Duff to Mr. & Mrs. Foord 24/7/1958, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Folder 2.

⁵⁷ Sanchita Balachandran, 'Among the Dead and their Possessions; A Conservator's role in the Death, Life, and Afterlife of Human Remains and their Associated Objects', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Fall/Winter 2009), pg.208.

⁵⁸ Santos, pg.38-39.

homogenous way. However, placing Chinese burial objects in a Chinese house or living setting is problematic, given that their appropriate setting is within a tomb.

Thus, the Hall of Oriental Art was the first of its kind at Canterbury Museum to provide a comprehensive installation of East Asian art. It set out to achieve this by adding items to the new display and by creating a Chinese setting in which to house them. Like all the other objects on display, being classified and displayed according to their material and date, Chinese burial objects underwent museologisation and ontological shifts, which objectified and ‘re-membered’ them in such a way that they were assumed to be meaningful to their expected audience. This resulted in the installation having a primarily aesthetic emphasis, which encouraged audiences to still view the objects as something of a curiosity, and to judge them according to Eurocentric standards of taste and beauty. Stocking might argue that the Hall of Oriental Art installation reflected the Eurocentric attitude toward objects deriving from ‘Eastern’ countries, that ‘Westerners’ had the right to appropriate the items as they wished, with little understanding of the objects or how to display them.⁵⁹ While I think this is in part true, since the objects have been displaced from their original context in China and displayed in a ‘Western’ museum, at the same time in the Hall of Oriental Art, an attempt was definitely made to acknowledge their provenance by arranging them in a Chinese setting. Although the Hall of Oriental Art did not reflect a rounded appreciation, understanding, and knowledge of Chinese art in its appearance, this was nonetheless being generated, and resulted subsequently in a more nuanced installation of East Asian art at Canterbury Museum in the 1990s.

1970s Refurbishment of Hall of Oriental Art

According to Athol McCredie, the 1970s and 1980s had been a boom period in museum and art gallery development in New Zealand, and was when public orientation and improving the viewer’s experience of

⁵⁹ George W. Stocking, Jr. (ed.), ‘Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture’, *History of Anthropology*, Vol.3, University of Wisconsin Press, USA, 1985, pg.5.

exhibitions became of prime concern to curators.⁶⁰ One of the ways in which this manifested, concurrent with European and American museums, was through audience involvement and interactive displays.⁶¹

Writing about museums and galleries in New Zealand, Keith W. Thomson observed that

Old Curiosity Shops have their admirers, but if intrigue they do, educate they do not... Those responsible for displays must select the 'material evidence' with care, and design the whole exhibit from labels to lighting so that the story is told in a manner comprehensible to the public towards which it is aimed... reflecting the whole wide range of museum users.⁶²

In addition, attitudes toward Chinese art were changing in the 1970s and 80s, which could be seen in the reception of an exhibition of the life-sized terracotta figures of Emperor Qin's army held at the McDougall Gallery in Christchurch in 1986. According to Ralph Riccalton '...large crowds are expected to view these treasures which are at once archaeological records and works of art.'⁶³ This indicates that Chinese objects were no longer being considered as mere curiosities of some far distant culture, but as 'works of art' worthy of exhibition in an *art* gallery. Moreover, the exhibition was expected to draw great interest from the public, suggesting that by this stage the public was considered to have sufficient understanding and appreciation of China and Chinese culture to want to view Chinese art in the context of an art gallery. It could be argued also that the attribution of the status of 'art', or even in some cases 'fine art', to Chinese objects helped to justify their value in the new context, as this was an indication that they met certain Eurocentric standards of value and taste.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ McCredie, pg.14-16, 20.

⁶¹ Ibid, pg.20, 32, 33-35.

⁶² Keith W. Thomson, *Art Galleries and Museums in New Zealand*, A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd., 1981, pg.5.

⁶³ Ralph Riccalton 'The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artefacts at Canterbury Museum', undated, CMR, Fine Arts 6/7, Box 31, Folder 82.

⁶⁴ Warren I. Cohen, 'Art Collecting as International Relations: Chinese Art and American Culture', *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.1, No.4, Winter 1992, pg.412-413.

There is evidence of changes having been made to the Hall of Oriental Art following its opening. For instance, in a letter to J. Foley in 1958, Duff expressed the desire to re-arrange the Japanese section of the display the following year, to show the development of Japanese pottery.⁶⁵ Another occasion was when the Hall of Oriental Art was closed for some time whilst the Museum underwent renovations, re-opening on 8 May 1976.⁶⁶ In a letter to Holmes on 16 October 1975, Duff states how the two halls which had been closed for some considerable time will re-open in 'renovated and reconstituted form'.⁶⁷ Moreover, in the Annual Report of 1976-7, it is stated that 'Despite extensive modification to compensate for the reduction of the display area, the new lay-out is even more exciting than before.'⁶⁸ Therefore, as these documents suggest, the Hall of Oriental Art underwent renovations in the time that it was closed. The Annual Report claims that 'The displays represent the applied arts of Japan and China. The Chinese section in particular is enriched by the early ceramics, bronzes and jades contributed over the years by Rewi Alley whose bust is featured in the Hall.'⁶⁹

Besides this, there is little information available regarding the renovated installation, but there is written evidence in an article by Riccalton that Chinese burial objects were included in the Hall of Oriental Art in the 1980s. Some of the items he lists are not evident in the photographs from the 1958 installation, so this again is an indication that certain exhibits were changed when the Hall of Oriental Art was re-opened. Riccalton observed that

Apart from the hunting hound illustrated, other tomb figures displayed in the Oriental Hall at

Canterbury Museum include a fearsome warrior guardian, a gnome-like 'earth spirit', camels heavily

⁶⁵ Letter from Roger Duff to J. Foley 1/9/1958, CMR, Fine Arts 6/11, Box 1, Folder 2.

⁶⁶ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1976-77, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 5, Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1976-77a, CMR, Fine Arts 7/4, Box 4.

⁶⁷ Letter from Roger Duff to Holmes 16/10/1975, CMR, Director's Correspondence 1972-1975, Fine Arts 3/1, Box 68, Folder 137.

⁶⁸ Canterbury Museum Annual Report 1976-77, CMR, Fine Arts 7/3, Folder 5.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

laden with bales of trade goods, graceful dancing girls and female musicians, and several examples of proud horses...⁷⁰

Most of these items listed are not present in the photographs from the 1958 display, except for ‘female musicians’, which may have included C1956.656. However, the 1970s display does sound to have included other items which I identified in Chapter One. For instance, the ‘gnome-like earth spirit’ is very likely C1956.232, and EX1999.80 and C1956.219 may have been included amongst the models of horses.

Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1994

The current display of Chinese burial objects at Canterbury Museum is housed within the ‘Hall of Asian Decorative Arts’ which was opened in October 1994. It consists mostly of Chinese and Japanese material classified as ‘decorative arts’, but also some of Korea and Indo-China,⁷¹ and is organised in chronological and geographical order, beginning with objects from China.⁷² Asian-inspired architectural features can be observed around the walls and adorning some of the cases, which were ‘...intended to accentuate the aesthetics of Asian decorative art.’⁷³ The main entrance to the installation is flanked by two large lion statues (fig.46), with simulated cave structures situated directly behind, containing the Chinese burial objects. There are several displays in cases (fig.47) scattered throughout the middle section of the floor, with a series of glass cases along either side of the hall (figs.48 & 49).

⁷⁰ Ralph Riccalton ‘The Rewi Alley Collection of Chinese Artefacts at Canterbury Museum’.

⁷¹ Hand-written notes ‘Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters’ 16/9/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90, Roger Fyfe, ‘Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept’ 15/9/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁷² Canterbury Museum pamphlet, ‘Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, November 1994, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁷³ Hall of Asian Decorative Arts opening, Annual Report Director’s Office, CMR.

Roger Fyfe, for one, believed that the installation would do much for relations between New Zealand and China, and would also present these to the public. One of the points in the 'Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters' for the design of the installation was that 'The gallery will be a product of, a statement about, and a tribute to, 250+ years of East/West contact.'⁷⁴ In the Press Release Fyfe stated that:

This superb display concept of the new Asian Gallery pays tribute to the generosity of Mr Rewi Alley and others who have given so generously to the Museum... Without any doubt, this display will become another major attraction in Canterbury for both local people and visitors. It will also play an important role in improving understanding between the East and the West.⁷⁵

It had been Duff's goal to improve understanding between East and West, and Fyfe's statement reflects that in the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts this intention was finally being realised.

The Chinese community in Christchurch were actively involved in the construction and development of the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts. In a letter (presumably to a representative of the Chinese community) Michael Trotter observed that '...Canterbury Museum is currently planning a new display on the theme 'Arts of Asia', and in conjunction with this we hope to establish an on-going relationship with the local Asian community.'⁷⁶ It is noted elsewhere that 'The Museum will initiate a programme of consultation with appropriate representatives of relevant ethnic or other communities and other identifiable interested

⁷⁴ Hand-written notes 'Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters' 16/9/1993, Fyfe, 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept', 15/9/1993.

⁷⁵ Press Release 14/10/1994, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁷⁶ The Chinese community in Christchurch were very supportive in the development and construction of the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts and the Chinese Gallery Fundraising Group was established to raise funds for, and promote the new Gallery, which included the organisation of various fundraising events, and advertising on the Chinese radio station and in the national Chinese newspaper. See: Letter from Michael Trotter 23/11/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90, Minutes of the meetings of the Chinese Gallery fundraising group (CGFG), CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

parties'⁷⁷ in the construction and development of the installation. For instance, three senior members of the Chinese community offered their assistance and expertise in getting the labels translated and written in Chinese, the completion of which was suggested to be celebrated at the Chinese lunar New Year.⁷⁸ The consideration given to acknowledging ties between China and New Zealand and the involvement of the local Chinese community in the development and construction of the installation is indicative of changing attitudes toward Chinese culture, and a desire to understand and better represent it in the museum display.

Included in the 'Asian Gallery Principles' was the intention that various aspects of the installation were to convey a 'feeling' of Asia'.⁷⁹ Thus, there had been a deliberate attempt on the part of the installation designers to evoke and portray a 'feeling' of the provenance of the objects, albeit one that was considered as such by the curators involved. It could be seen as a sort of 'narrative' of remembering,⁸⁰ as a way of inviting the visitor to engage with the objects. In fact, it shows recognition that the provenance of the objects should be central to the visitor's appreciation of them. However, the document also expresses that this Asian 'feeling' must be '...in a tastefully and subtly presented manner,'⁸¹ so as to acknowledge the provenance and origin of the material and culture, but not so overt as to overpower the objects.

Acknowledging the 'Asian-ness' of the material in this manner can be problematic as it imposes Eurocentric ideas of what this constitutes onto the display. In addition, one of the proposed points in the 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' was to exhibit 'archetypes of cultures; people, architecture, etc.'⁸². This suggests interpretation on the part of the curators as to what objects best portray what are in their minds the most 'typical' of categories, essentially creating a biased display. Every museum display is

⁷⁷ Roger Fyfe 'Asian Gallery Development Principles' 8/9/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁷⁸ Letter from Pansy Wong to CGFG 6/12/1994, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁷⁹ 'Asian Gallery Principles' received 19/8/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁸⁰ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pg.26.

⁸¹ 'Asian Gallery Principles' 19/8/1993.

⁸² Fyfe, 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' 15/9/1993, Hand-written notes 'Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters' 16/9/1993.

biased in one way or another but the possibility of this coming across in the experience of the installation is acknowledged by Fyfe in a hand-written letter to Trotter titled 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concepts', where it is stated that '...In essence the collection is a product of 'western' perceptions and acquisitiveness for the 'eastern' arts. The gallery concept must by default revolve around this bias.'⁸³ It is also noted that most of the material in the display has been exported or collected by the 'West' and that it should be identified as such.⁸⁴ Thus, the fact that the objects are derived from an East Asian country, have been collected by 'Westerners', placed on display in a 'Western' museum, and interpreted according to a 'Western' frame of reference, is acknowledged by Museum staff.

It was taken into account that the 'display furniture' and cases had to be of high quality so as to show utmost respect to the objects. It was noted that '...In China and Japan even modest objects are packed in sandalwood and silk. We are presenting bulk treasure. The display staff must develop secure cases that feel and look appropriate...'.⁸⁵ It was also suggested that the pseudo-Gothic arches evident in the gallery be concealed,⁸⁶ so as not to conflict with, or detract from, the East Asian theme and architectural features of the installation. The attempt to create a 'feeling of Asia' and displaying the objects in an 'appropriate' setting indicates acknowledgement of their having a unique significance or sacrality, and this could therefore be seen as an endeavour to 'resacralise' them in the museum context,⁸⁷ given that, as Sullivan and Balachandran argue, sacred objects become de-sacralised when taken out of their original context.⁸⁸ David Chidester, on the other hand, would argue that in just being part of a museum display, the objects are set apart from the profane, assembled to be revered in some way,⁸⁹ and automatically transfused with

⁸³ Roger Fyfe to Michael Trotter, Hand-written notes of 'Draft of Asian Gallery Display Concepts' 15/9/1993, CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

⁸⁴ Hand-written notes 'Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters' 16/9/1993.

⁸⁵ Fyfe, 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' 15/9/1993.

⁸⁶ Fyfe to Trotter, Hand-written notes of 'Draft of Asian Gallery Display Concepts 15/9/1993.

⁸⁷ Balachandran, pg.201.

⁸⁸ Sullivan, pg.146, Balachandran, pg.208, 212.

⁸⁹ David Chidester in Sullivan, pg.1.

sacred status. So, from Chidester's view, the objects are re-sacralised in the museum, whether or not their original context is recognised. Still, there was concern for the proper, respectful treatment and display of East Asian art and objects, and this is perhaps why such effort was put into the construction of elaborate cases and structures to house the objects, such as the caves for the Chinese burial objects.

In the 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' for the design of the installation, Fyfe stated that 'The display presentation must incorporate the best techniques used to exhibit 'decorative arts' in modern museums',⁹⁰ indicating that popular, likely international, museological trends informed the conception of the gallery. In-keeping with modern museological trends was the desire to employ modern lighting techniques, preferably '...selective use of cold 12v. 'pin-spot direct down light and back lighting',⁹¹ which serve to individualise the objects on display. The installation was intended to be object-intensive,⁹² and open storage was a modern museological feature utilised to meet this need. As described in a publication on the opening of the Hall:

To create visitor impact, the gallery has a number of unusual features. An impressive 'walled' entrance (the symbol of the Empire), guardian lions, tiered displays, innovative wall case design, murals, a central 'shrine', large free-standing glass cases and visual storage drawers were all designed to contribute to the overall effect...⁹³

Open storage also meant that more of the Museum's East Asian art collection could be displayed at once (a total of 1500 objects, in fact), when previously many more objects had been kept in storage.⁹⁴ But still, the permanent collection was far greater than what could be displayed, as was the case with the Hall of Oriental Art, so it was still necessary to be selective, and the items displayed were those considered to be

⁹⁰ Fyfe, 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' 15/9/1993.

⁹¹ Hand-written notes 'Asian Gallery: Summary Display Concept Parameters' 16/9/1993, Fyfe, 'Draft Asian Gallery Display Concept' 15/9/1993.

⁹² Canterbury Museum pamphlet, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, November 1994, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts opening, Annual Report Director's Office.

⁹³ Hall of Asian Decorative Arts opening, Annual Report Director's Office.

⁹⁴ Canterbury Museum pamphlet, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, November 1994.

the best.⁹⁵ There is an indication in the 'Asian Gallery Principles' that the 'best' items were those which were originals, as Fyfe states that 'The Museum has sufficient genuine material to be able to exclude the use of copies or reproduction material in displays.'⁹⁶

As mentioned above, the display of Chinese burial objects is split between two cave constructions on either side of the hall, set behind the two large lion statues which flank the entrance. The cave constructions are built to simulate an archaeological grave site, in an attempt to recreate the original context where the objects would have been found. The outside of the caves appears like castle architecture; however, upon entering the cave one is surrounded by what is made to feel like an underground tomb. The display of the objects in this way could be seen as an attempt at resacralising them, by replacing them in a reconstruction of their original sacred context. However, recreating the archaeological dig is arguably more representative of the archeologist and the act of discovering the objects than it is about the actual contents and their original owners. The re-membering of the objects in this way places a certain construction upon history⁹⁷, highlighting issues discussed by Perter Vergo and Preziosi, and encourages the viewer to experience and 'remember' them in relation to their excavation, as objects that were dug up and 'discovered' rather than things that functioned within the tomb. Thus, although there is the reference to the tomb, the actual meaning and purpose of the objects, and their inextricable entanglements with death, are somewhat marginalised. It is interesting to consider the display in relation Maria-Jose Blanco & Ricarda Vidal, Balachandran, and Alberti, et al's ideas regarding the display of death objects, as they would argue that since the objects are kept at a respectable distance from the viewer, behind glass, that they can be comfortably engaged with as death objects.⁹⁸ On the one hand this is the case, however, they are not identified as death-related objects, so it is unlikely that visitors

⁹⁵ Fyfe 'Asian Gallery Development Principles' 8/9/1993.

⁹⁶ Fyfe 'Asian Gallery Principles' 10/8/1993.

⁹⁷ Vergo, pg.2-3, Preziosi in Duro, pg.101-102.

⁹⁸ Balachandran, pg.200, Alberti, et al, pg.136, 137, 138, Maria-Jose Blanco & Ricarda Vidal (eds.), *The Power of Death: Contemporary Reflections on Death in Western Society*, Beghahn Books, New York; Oxford, 2015, pg.13-14.

would consider engaging with them in this way, anyway. Nevertheless, this allows for subjective experiences of the objects which may or may not be death-related, giving the anticipated modern 'Western' audience a choice as to the extent they engage with the objects in this way.

The objects are arranged behind glass on the floor and on ledges jutting out of the cave walls, which are coated in a gritty material to give the impression of sand (figs.50 &51, 52 &53). The objects in the cave on the left side of the hall (when standing at the entrance facing into the hall) are all from the Neolithic to Han Dynasty, and the objects in the cave on right side are from the Han to Tang Dynasty. This is mentioned in the description of the Chinese section of the installation in a pamphlet entitled 'Hall of Asian Decorative Arts'. It states that:

The earliest objects, displayed approximately within the walled entrance, date to the middle Neolithic period between approximately 5000 B.C. and A.D. 220... The cases, where possible, contain artifacts with either material, artistic or functional similarities and follow a broad chronological tradition.⁹⁹

Thus, the display of the Chinese burial objects is arranged chronologically, and within this the objects appear to be grouped according to subject and/or similar objects. As with the rest of the installation, curators were quite selective as to which Chinese burial objects were chosen for display, as there are many more in the Museum collection than what are shown in the caves. There are also more objects displayed in the right wing than the left. Where in the left wing there is a predominance of pots and jars, in the right there are more figures and accessories, reflecting the types of objects used in burials during these periods. Among the pots displayed in the left wing is C1947.2 (fig.54), and among the figures in the right wing is C1956.656 in one grouping (fig.55), and in another grouping C1956.228 (fig.56). Also in the right wing is a grouping including C1948.40, C1947.8, and C1947.9 (fig.57), with C1956.233 in another (fig.58). As the images show, among the groupings of objects, some are placed upside down, at angles to

⁹⁹ Canterbury Museum pamphlet, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, November 1994.

one another, or lying down, likely in an attempt to make them appear ‘naturally’ as they would have been found by an archaeologist, not as they would have been set out in a tomb.

There was some controversy over the use and inclusion of labels and extra information about objects in the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, since the installation was intended to have a visual emphasis. In the pamphlet describing the installation, it is observed that

...Objects in the gallery are presented purely as items of decorative art in their own right; it is not the intention of the displays to attempt to cover the last 5000 years of Asian social and technological history. The artifact-intensive exhibition is aimed at high visual impact, with a minimum of labels...¹⁰⁰

However, in the ‘Asian Gallery Development Principles’, Fyfe stated that:

As the material will be foreign to most visitors it will be necessary to provide basic information labels. Other information should include a gallery handbook and an accompanying MusVis programme. The more significant objects may require more comprehensive information.¹⁰¹

It is noted in an article documenting the opening of the Hall that:

...Yet to be installed are an ambient sound system and a multi-media computer station that will encourage visitors to browse through written and pictorial information not included in the displays. It is hoped to design and prepare a budget for those items during the 1996-97 year.¹⁰²

It is likely that the ‘multi-media computer station’ is what Fyfe refers to as the MusVis (Museum Visitor Information) programme. These additional features were proposed to ‘further enhance’ the visitor’s

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Fyfe ‘Asian Gallery Development Principles’ 8/9/1993.

¹⁰² Hall of Asian Decorative Arts opening, Annual Report Director’s Office.

experience of the installation,¹⁰³ and were estimated to cost \$6500 each.¹⁰⁴ The gallery handbook is not available today and evidence suggests that the MusVis programme and sound system either never eventuated, or were not successful, as neither feature as part of the installation today. If the planned accompanying information had been provided, this may have led to quite a different experience of the objects, and perhaps for them to be appreciated more for their original function and purpose.

The only data present in the display today is on information panels accompanying the objects, which, for the most part, serve to identify the object(s) by a few key words and what date/period they derive from. Apart from this, a little more information is provided for some of the more 'significant' items, describing the objects and why they have been crafted in the way they have. The 'significant' items chosen for greater description tend to be those which are quintessential of a particular type or group of objects and are representative of their most common and characteristic features. As is the case with the rest of the installation, there are very few information panels accompanying the Chinese burial objects display, with only two in each wing, and only one extra label in the left wing. The panel in the left wing reads 'China- Ceramic wares, neolithic and Han Dynasty, about 5000 B.C. to A.D. 220' (fig.59) and the panel in the right wing reads 'China- Ceramic wares, Han and Tang Dynasty, about 206 B.C. to A.D. 906' (fig.60). Above each of the panels in English is a translation in Chinese. The panels for each of the displays define the objects as 'ceramic wares' and make no reference to the fact that the objects are grave goods. Although an effort has been made to construct the caves which mimic an underground tomb, there is no reference to the objects as having derived from this source. The only information provided, besides the identification panels, is a blurb in the left wing accompanying a 'Hill jar' (fig.61). This object is described as being a 'tomb furnishing' for the storage of mirrors or 'other personal effects'. However, this is all the information presented to identify it as a grave good.

¹⁰³ Minutes of the meeting of the CGFG held at Canterbury Museum on 8/6/1994.

¹⁰⁴ 'Asian Gallery: Breakdown of Costs', CMR, Anthony Wright Special Subject Files, 2720 Exhibitions and Displays, Hall of Asian Decorative Arts 1995, Fine Arts 4/5, Box 16, Folder 89&90.

Although additional information was clearly planned to accompany the overall installation, it is interesting that there was little regard for concerns such as the ‘social’ and ‘technological’ history of the objects.¹⁰⁵ The visual emphasis of the Chinese burial object display accords with this, and besides a lack of labels and accompanying information, this effect is achieved also by the use of dioramas. In Jane Insley’s words, ‘The museum diorama is a form of 3D model, showing a scene, an event or a landscape, which has been commissioned for a particular exhibition purpose.’¹⁰⁶ The display of Chinese burial objects in the Hall of Asian Decorative Arts shows characteristics of this type of display. For example, a typical characteristic of a diorama is displaying material as if it is in its natural habitat,¹⁰⁷ as do the tomb-like simulations which house the objects, which the viewer is invited to walk into and imagine encountering the objects in their ‘natural habitat’ of the tomb. Alberti, et al may consider the diorama display to sensationalise the objects and utilise their entertainment potential,¹⁰⁸ by placing them in this theatrical sort of setting. However, since it is intended to realistically depict the original context of the objects, I would argue it does not concur to their idea fully. After the 1960s, the diorama technique developed to provide a multisensory interactive experience.¹⁰⁹ This is particularly evident in the display of the Chinese burial objects as the viewer actually enters into it, allowing a full body experience. This highlights characteristics of museum experience identified by Sheldon Annis, Susan A. Crane, and Carol Duncan, that memory, imagination, and the senses are stimulated in the museum.¹¹⁰ The dioramas invite this kind of experience, and to refer to Crane and Duncan’s ideas specifically, they encourage the construction of new personal and collective memories in response to the objects. Thus, without the

¹⁰⁵ Canterbury Museum pamphlet, ‘Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, November 1994.

¹⁰⁶ Jane Insley, ‘Little Landscapes: dioramas in museum displays’, *Endeavour*, Vol.32, No.1, pg.27.

¹⁰⁷ Karen A. Rader & Victoria E.M. Cain, *Life on Display: Revolutionizing U.S. Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century*, University of Chicago Press, 2014, pg.51, Sue Dale Tunnicliffe & Annette Scheersoi (eds.), *Natural History Dioramas: History, Construction and Educational Role*, Springer, 2015, pg.1-2, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Alberti, et al, pg.135, 143.

¹⁰⁹ Jilian Walliss, ‘Nature, Nation and the Museum: the mid-twentieth century New Zealand experience’, University of Melbourne, *Museum and Society*, 9 (3), Nov. 2011, pg.214-215.

¹¹⁰ Annis in Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum*, Leicester University Press, 2000, pg.3, Susan A. Crane (ed.), *Museums and Memory*, Stanford University Press, California, 2000, pg.80, Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: inside public art museums*, Routledge, 1995, pg.11-12.

distraction of information regarding the 'social and technological history' of the objects, this allows for visitors to have their own shared and personal experiences of the objects as opposed to one that is imposed upon them.

Conclusion

Having explored some of the various issues and complexities of displaying Chinese burial objects in a museum, it is clear that these raise many more questions than could reasonably be answered in one piece of research.

The temporal and cultural distance of Chinese burial objects from their current context in a museum in New Zealand allows for a more objective study of them and discussion of the issues they raise through being exhibited without much inhibition, in a way which may not be so comfortable with objects which are 'closer to home'. This distance helps to facilitate an engagement with some of these issues, and offer potential solutions to them.

Although I have used Chinese burial objects as a case study, burial objects from many other cultures are displayed in museums around the world, as are other objects which are death-related, considered sacred, or for one reason or another, not intended to be looked at.

For instance, in Maori culture, objects which are prized or considered as 'treasures' are referred to as taonga, and others are considered sacred (tapu). These Maori objects feature in museum displays both in New Zealand and internationally, which calls for questioning as to whether objects of this nature should be displayed either. This presents the same issue as with Chinese burial objects, which have specific cultural meaning in their original context, but are displayed in another context which may likely be unfamiliar with this.

Therefore, my discussion of Chinese burial objects brings to light other objects which are controversial to display, enabling them also to be seen in a new light. Objects regarded as sacred, or related to death or burial practices in many other cultures have already been studied, but Chinese burial objects have not. Therefore, my research joins the debate about such objects and their display, and contributes to scholarship on exhibiting burial and/or death-related objects.

The extent to which sacred, death-related, or culturally sensitive objects can be ‘properly’ exhibited remains an important subject for debate, and indeed the fundamental question remains as to whether they should be displayed at all.

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Figures



Fig.1 Model Granary, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1948.40



Fig.2 Model Granary, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1947.8



Fig.3 Model Well-head, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1947.9



Fig.4 Model Granary, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 93.1.247



Fig.5 Model Granary, Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 9 B.C.), National Museum of Chinese History, Beijing



Fig.6 Model Granary, 180 B.C, excavated at Dongdianzi



Fig.7 Model Granary, Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Japan

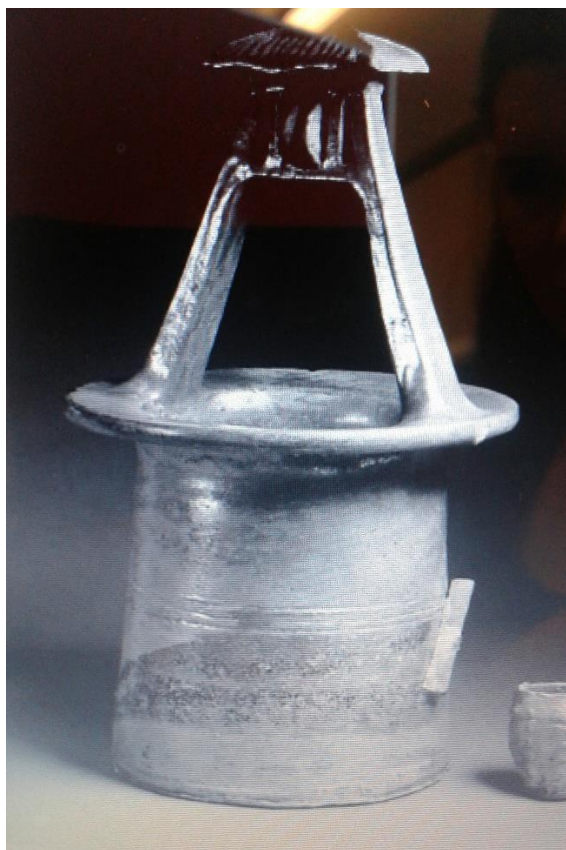


Fig.8 Model Well-Head with Bucket, Eastern Han Dynasty (25 A.D.- 220 A.D), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.662.12a, b



Fig.9 Model Well-Head, Late Eastern Han Dynasty (25 A.D.- 220 A.D.), Henan Museum

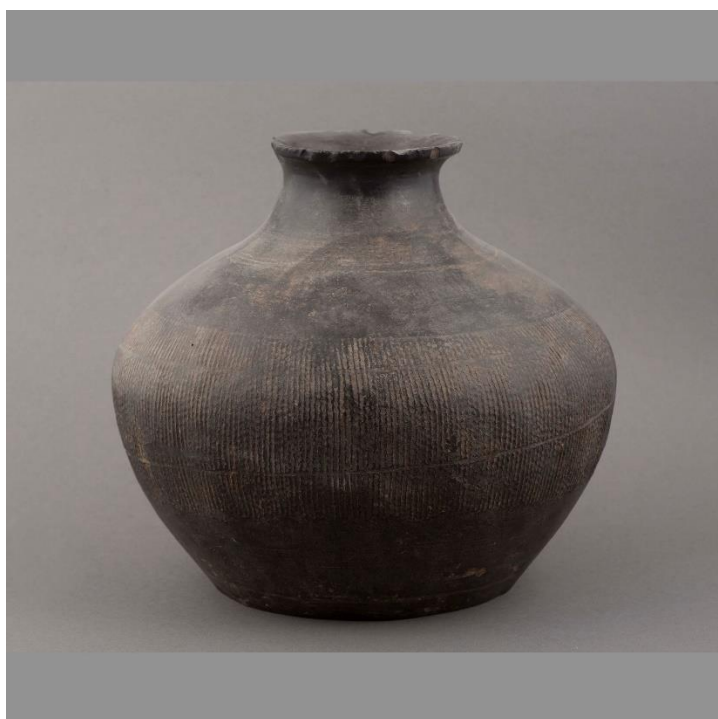


Fig.10 Pot/Wine Jar, Han Dynasty (between 200B.C. and 200A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1947.2



Fig.11 Pot/Wine Jar, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1947.1

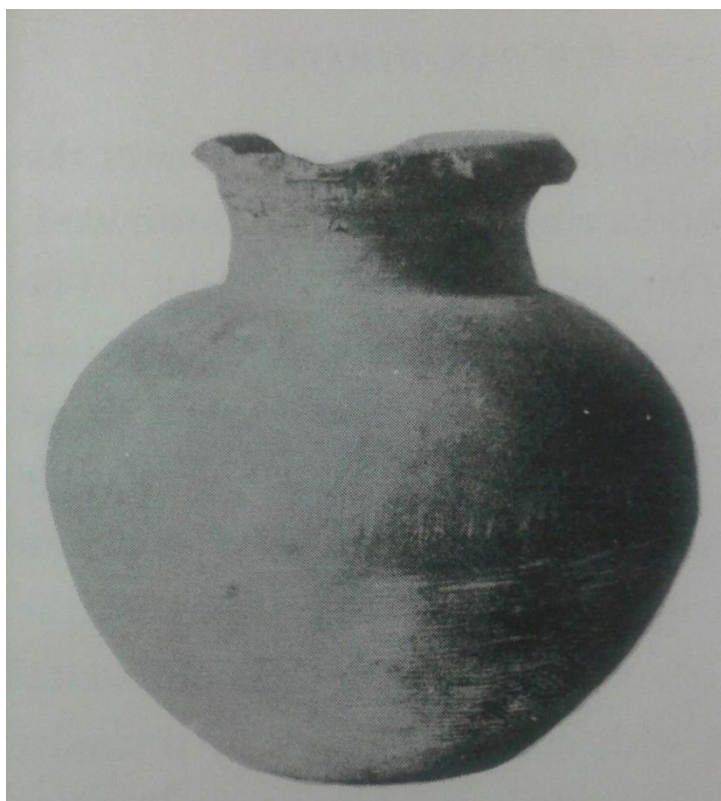


Fig.12 Water Jar, Zhou Period (1046-256 B.C.), American Museum of Natural History, 70.14837

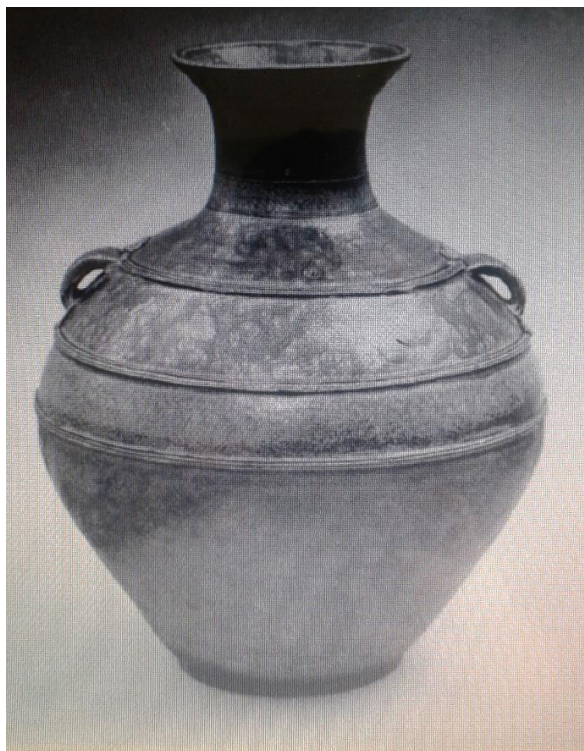


Fig.13 Jar (*hu*), Late Western Han Dynasty or early Eastern Han Dynasty (100B.C.- 100A.D.), Los Angeles County Museum M.52.2.1

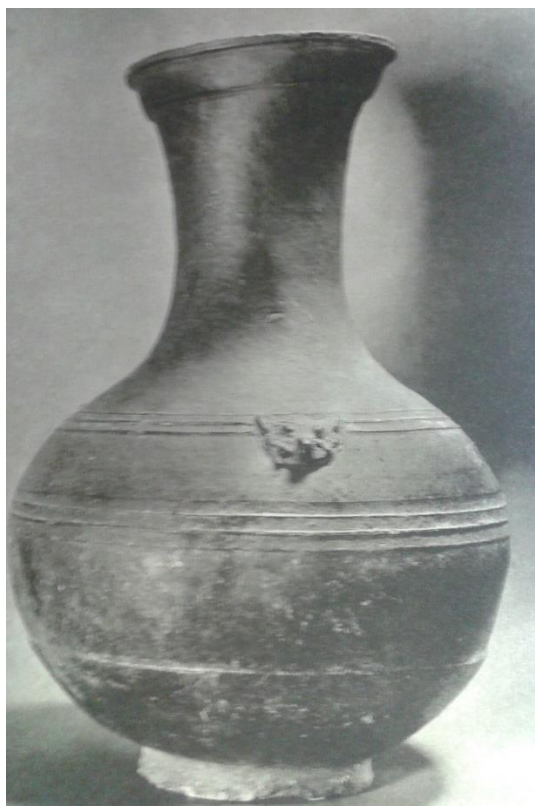


Fig.14 Jar (*hu*), Later Han Dynasty, excavated from Loyang Region



Figs.15 & 16 Model Stove/brazier, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1947.3



Fig.17 Grave Furnishing, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm



Fig.18 Stove, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), American Museum of Natural History, 70/11856 AB

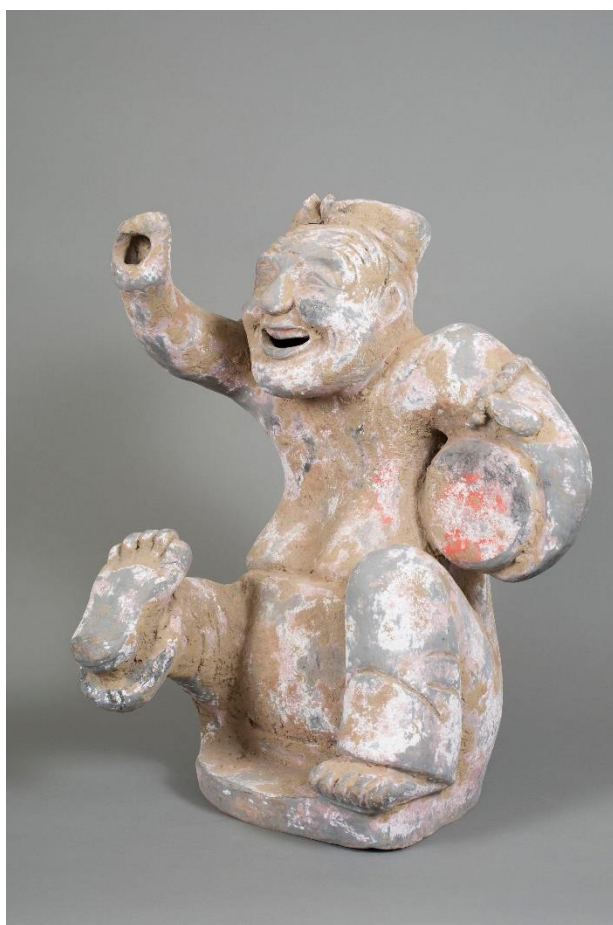


Fig.19 Model of Seated Drummer, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1965.9

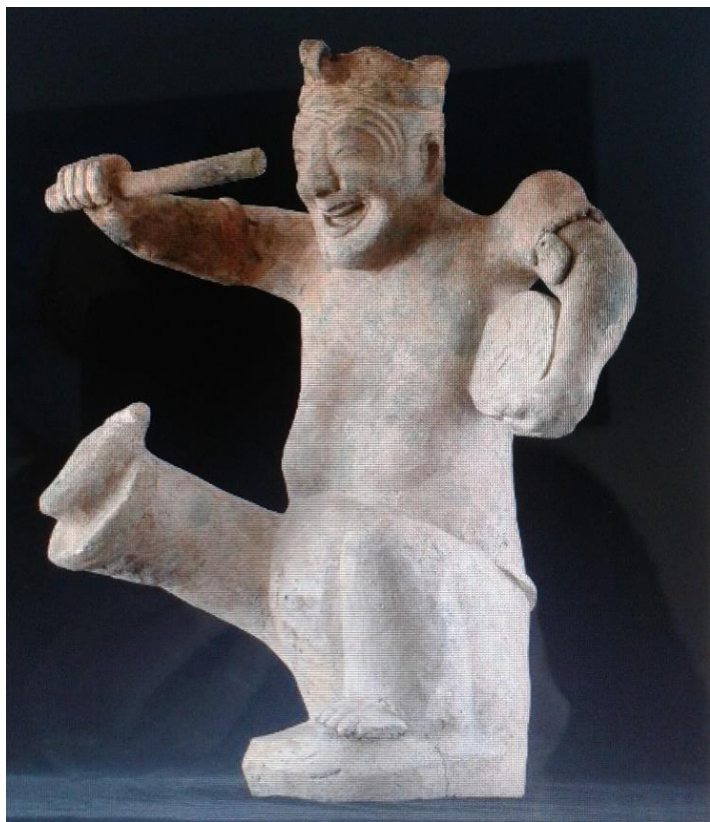


Fig.20 Squatting Drummer, Eastern Han Dynasty (25 A.D.- 220 A.D.), Minneapolis Institute of Arts, G215

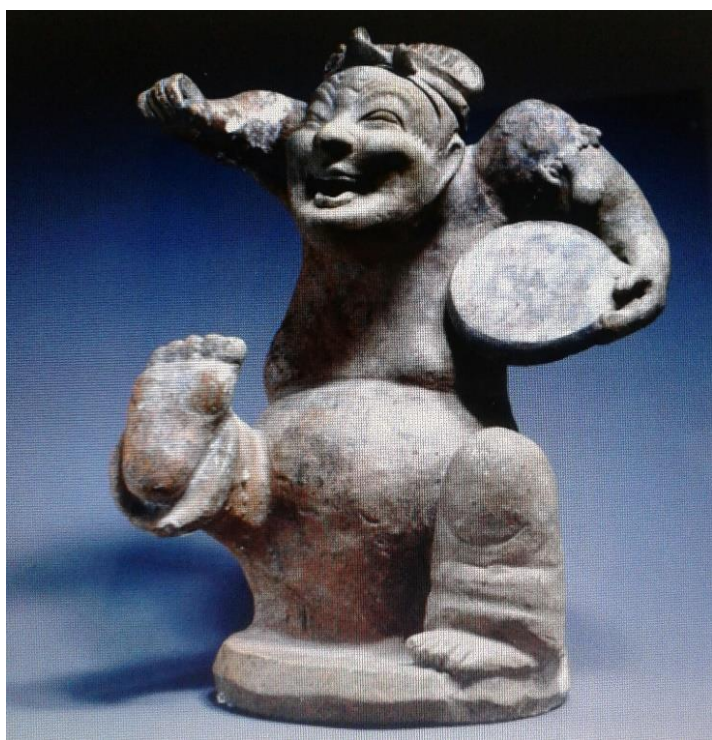


Fig.21 Squatting Drummer, 1st-2nd Century, Xindu County Bureau of Cultural Antiquities

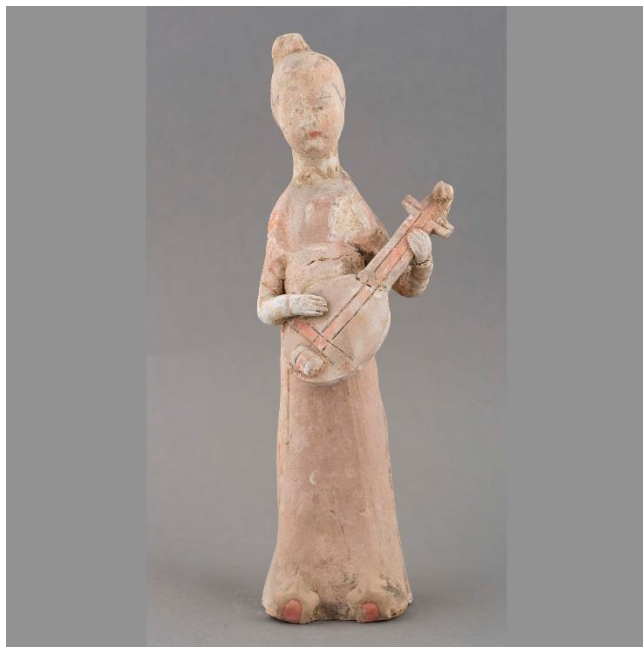


Fig.22 Model of Lute (*pipa*) Player, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1956.656

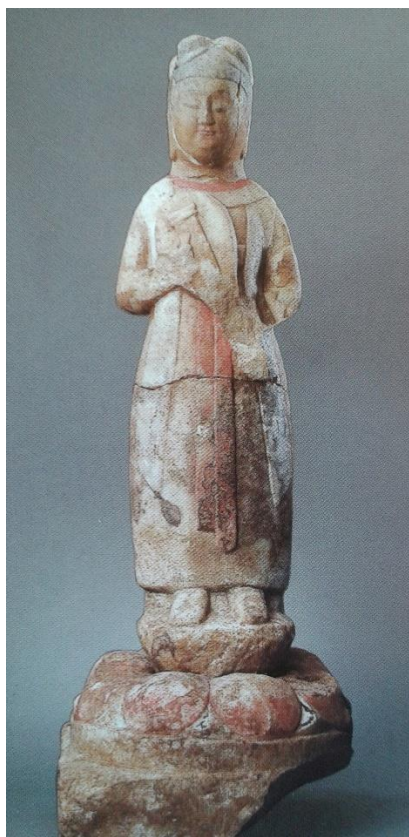


Fig.23 Female Musician, Sui Dynasty (581–618 A.D.), Jinyuan Bureau of Cultural Properties and Tourism

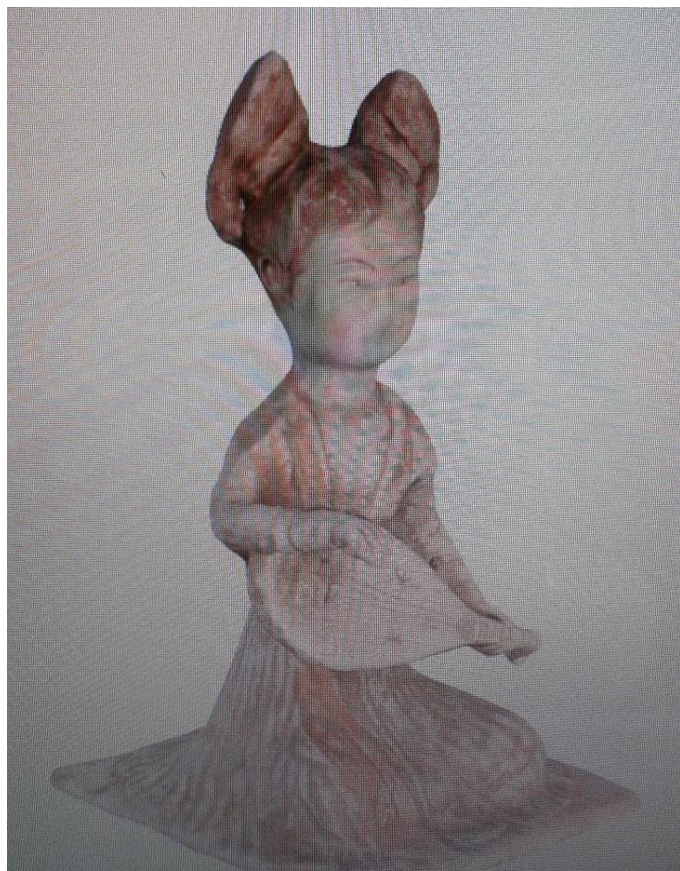


Fig.24 Lute Player, Museo Di Arte Orientale, Torino, Italy



Fig.25 Pottery figure of a musician, Sui Dynasty (581–618 A.D.), Collection of Andre Carlhian



Fig.26 Model of Standing Man, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1956.228



Fig.27 Figurine, 520 A.D., excavated from the tomb of Yuan Shao, Loyang area



Fig.28 Tomb Figure of a Man, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.)



Fig.29 Figures of Peasants, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.)



Fig.30 Soldier Attendants), excavated from the tomb of Yang Sixu, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, National Museum of China



Fig.31 Model of Zodiac Animal (Dog), Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1956.233



Fig.32 Set of the Twelve Zodiac Animals (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig), Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Shaanxi History Museum

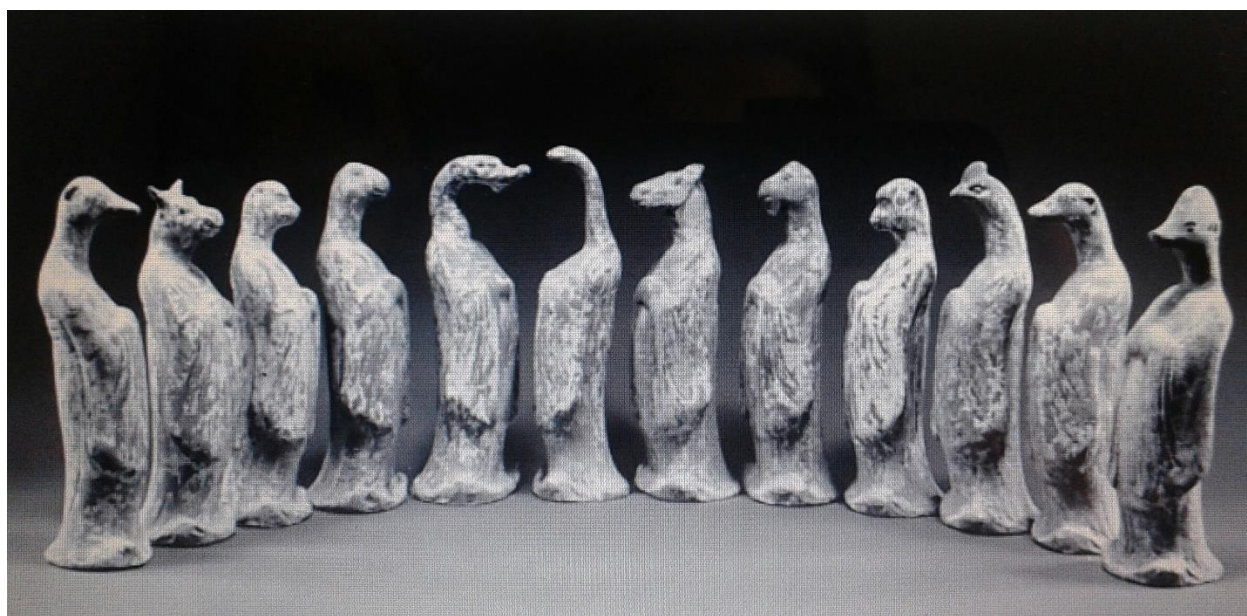


Fig.33 Set of the Twelve Zodiac Animals, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.662.7a-1



Fig.34 Model of Tomb Guardian, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1956.232



Fig.35 Tomb Guard, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.)



Fig.36 Man-lion Tomb Guardian, first half of 8th Century, Institute of Fine Arts, Chicago

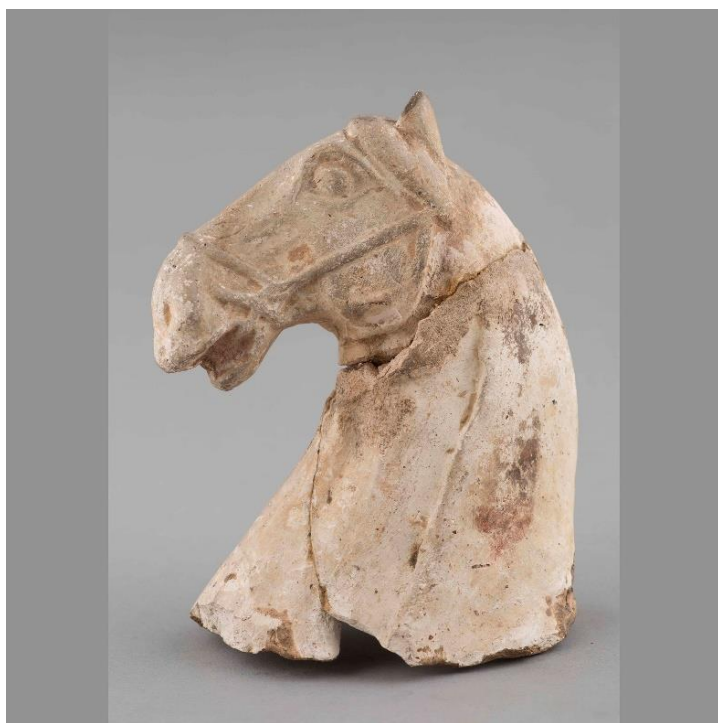


Fig.37 Model of Ferghana Horse Head, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, EX1999.80



Fig.38 Prancing Horse & Two Fighting Horses, Tang Dynasty (618- 907 A.D.)

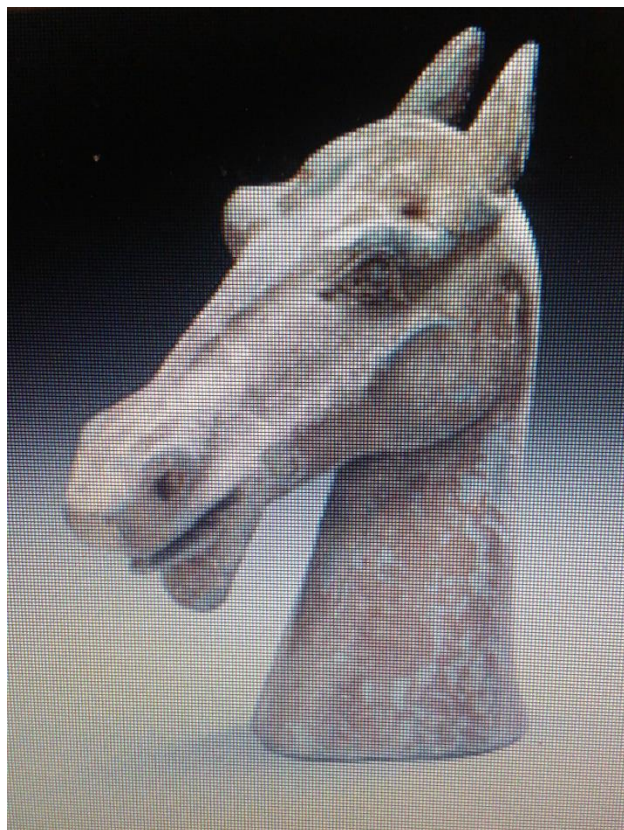


Fig.39 Head of Horse, Eastern Han Dynasty, 25-220 A.D., Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.12-1929



Fig.40 Model of *qilin* Unicorn Horse, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, C1956.219

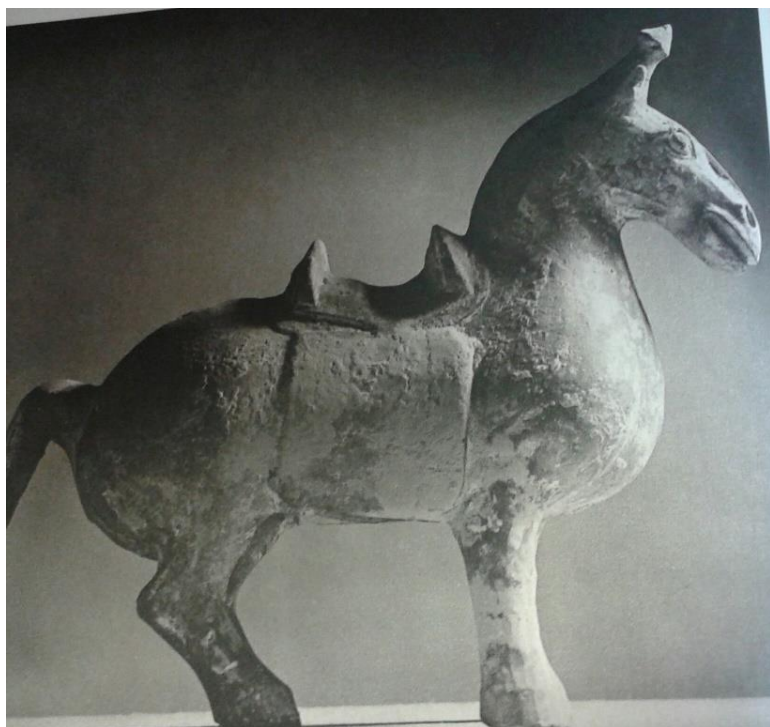


Fig.41 Standing Horse, Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.)

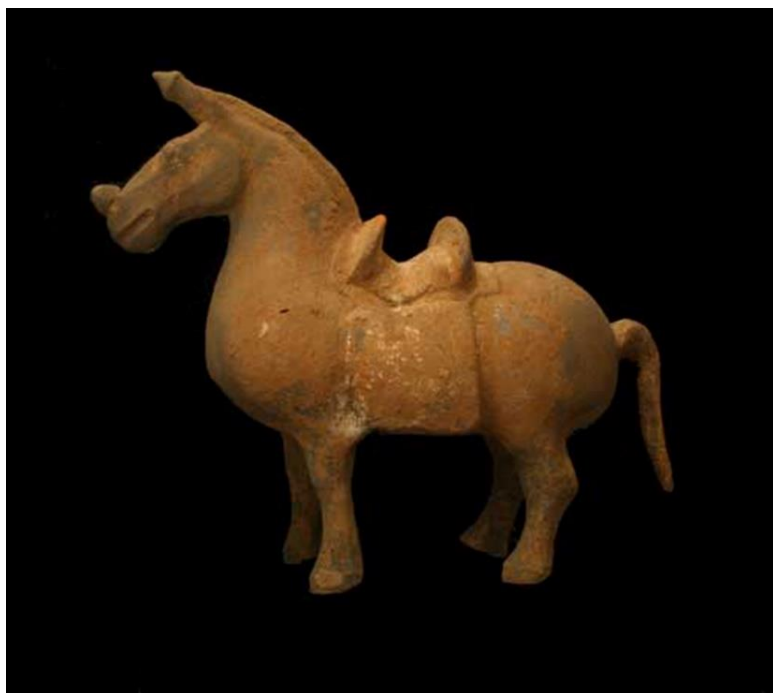


Fig.42 Unicorn Horse, Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Barakat Collection, United States, H.518a



Fig.43 Hall of Oriental Art, corner of Hall showing Jade case (centre) and Buddha statue beyond



Fig.44 Hall of Oriental Art, general view of Hall

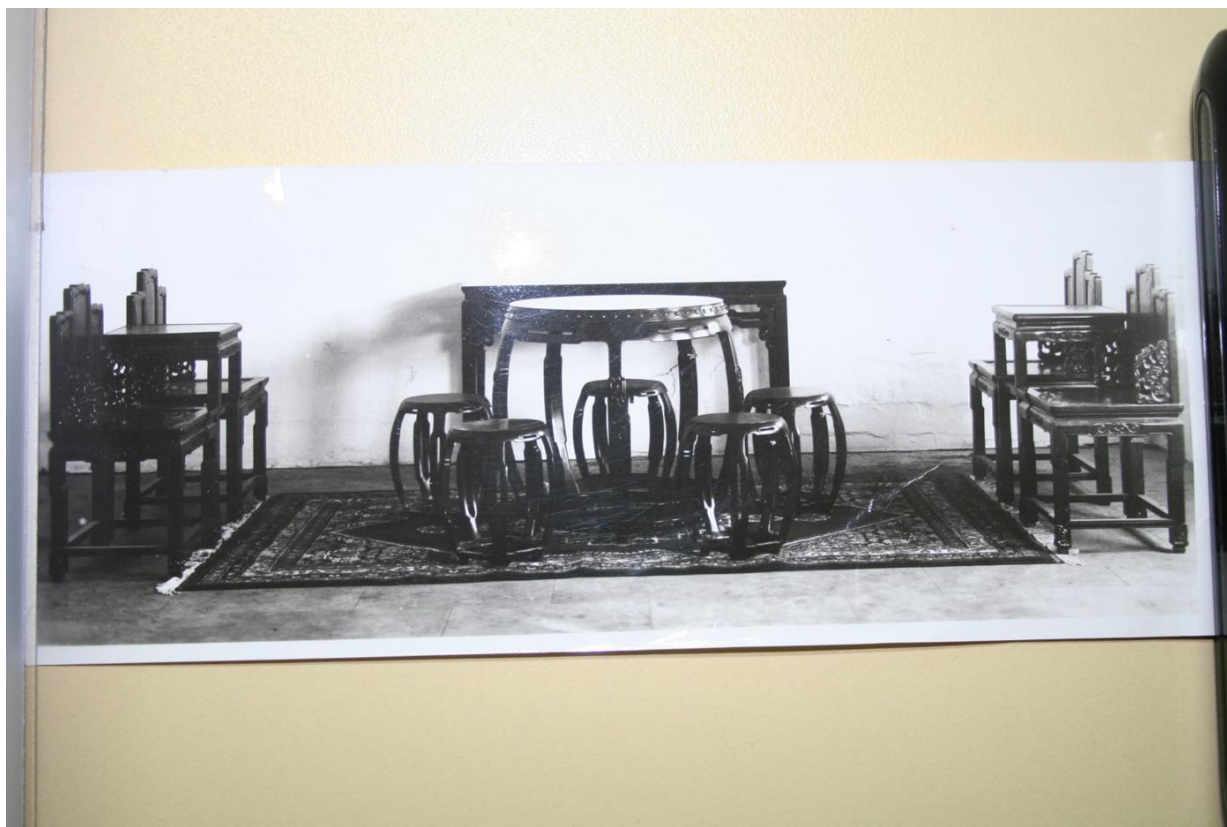


Fig.45 Chinese furniture from Imperial Palace Museum (including table, chairs, and carpet) in situ at one end of the Hall of Oriental Art



Fig.46 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, main entrance to Hall showing lions flanking entrance



Fig.47 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, centre cabinet displaying Buddhist statues/objects with Chinese style architecture



Fig.48 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, glass case along wall of left wing displaying various ceramics with Chinese style architecture



Fig.49 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, glass case along wall of right wing displaying various ceramics with Chinese style architecture



Fig.50 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, cave opening/entrance of left wing



Fig.51 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, cave opening/entrance of right wing



Fig.52 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, cave interior of left wing



Fig.53 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, cave interior of right wing



Fig.54 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of cave interior of left wing showing C1947.2



Fig.55 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of cave interior of right wing showing C1956.656



Fig.56 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of cave interior of right wing showing C1956.228



Fig.57 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of cave interior of right wing showing C1948.40, C1947.8, and C1947.9



Fig.58 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of cave interior of right wing showing C1956.233

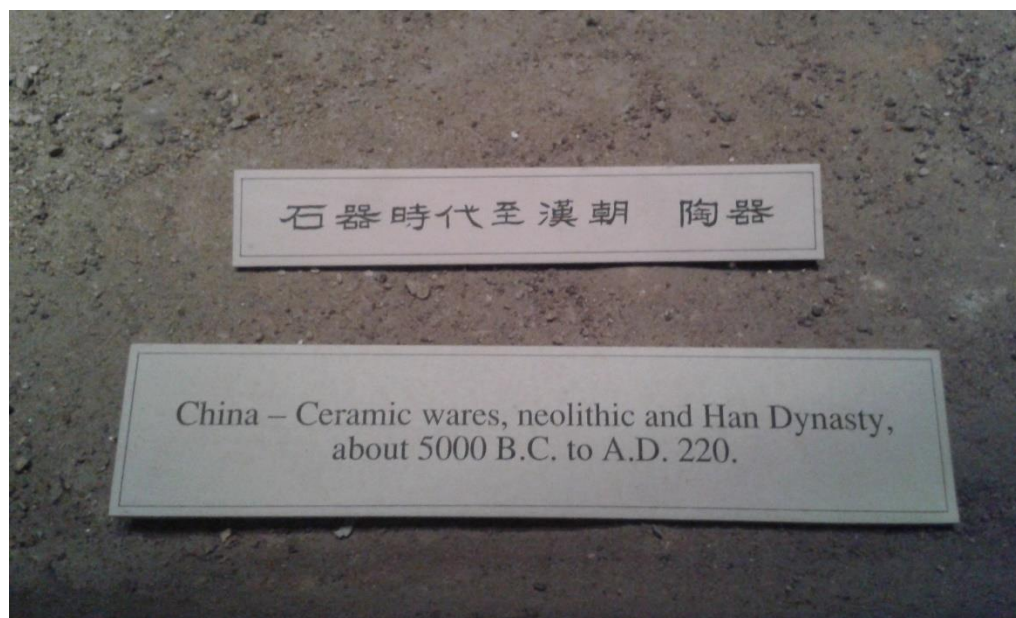


Fig.59 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of information panel in left wing

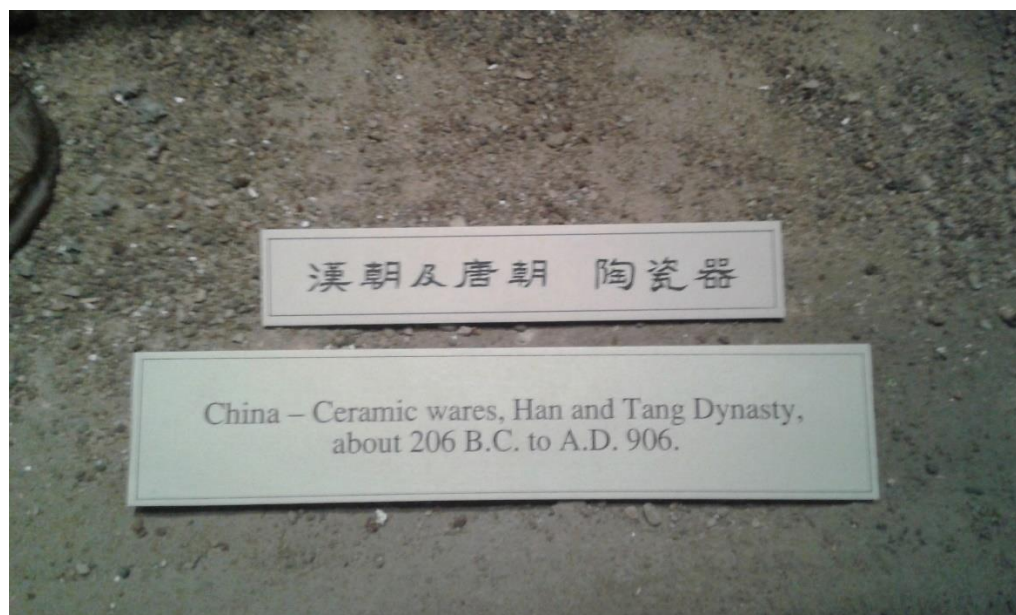


Fig.60 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of information panel in right wing

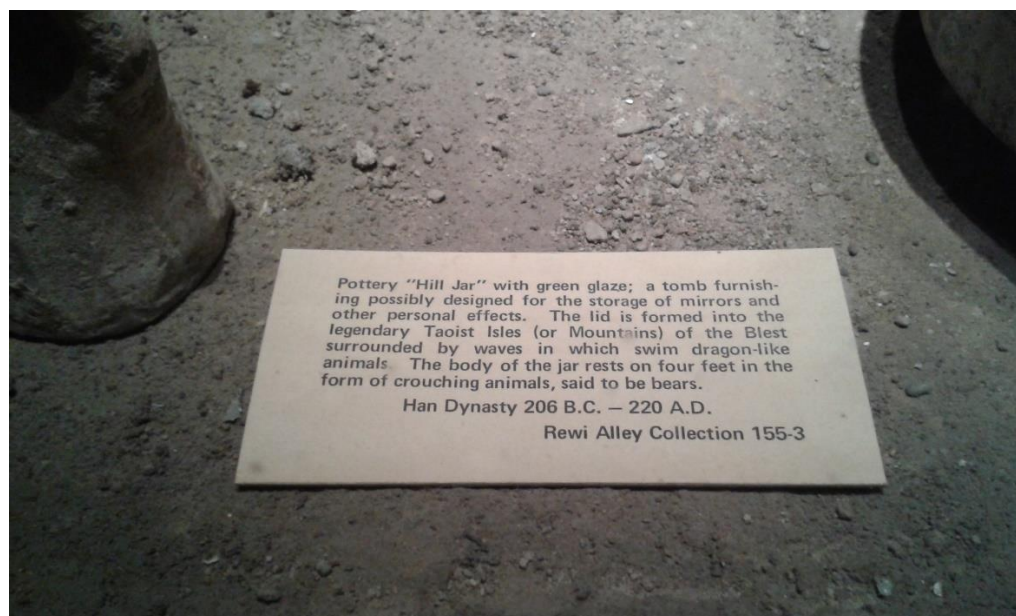


Fig.61 Hall of Asian Decorative Arts, detail of label in left wing

